THE UNREALIZED LOGIC OF RELIGION

W. H. FITCHETT
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To Mr Carter
from
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Edward G. Andrews
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July. 24. 1906.

THE UNREALIZED LOGIC OF RELIGION

The 35th Fernley Lecture

THE UNREALIZED LOGIC OF RELIGION

A STUDY IN CREDIBILITIES

BY

W. H. FITCHETT, B.A., LL.D.

AUTHOR OF

'DEEDS THAT WON THE EMPIRE,' 'HOW ENGLAND SAVED EUROPE,' ETC.

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THE UNREALIZED LOGIC OF RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

Religion and its Logic

'Syllogistic reasoning is utterly inadequate to the subtlety of nature.'—Bacon, *Novum Organum.*

'The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma; no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.'—Newman.

THERE exists a somewhat distressful form of religious literature known as the Evidences of Christianity, in which we have the argument for the Christian faith set out at length, and on a scheme of what may be called scheduled logic. We are offered evidences external and internal; proofs direct, indirect, and collateral; arguments *a priori*, *a posteriori*, and intuitional. The whole is a demonstration of the Christian faith which derives its cogency from the facts of history, the frame of the physical universe, the characteristics of the Bible itself. No

one desires to speak disrespectfully of this demonstration. It is a stately structure of proof, with deep foundations and sky-piercing summits.

But to master the scientific and formal 'evidences' of Christianity is the business of experts. For the man in the street, the man whose business is not theology, or literature, or scholarship, life is too brief, duty too urgent, the hours too swift and crowded, to make any adequate study of these evidences possible. Who, moreover, can afford to wait for a faith till it is built up, course after course, on a foundation of scientific argument? Nay, if we have mastered this great and technical demonstration, for practical purposes we must forget it. Who goes back to the categories of formed logic in search of a tonic for a sick faith? Religion, in a sense, is never a deduction; it is, to quote Newman, 'a message, or a history, or a vision.'

Sir Oliver Lodge, with a logic too daring for most of us, contends that we err by linking our religious beliefs too closely, or at least too exclusively, to specific historical facts—facts that occurred in a definite locality, at a definite moment of time, and are sustained by a more or less convincing array of direct evidence. We have such facts; they are unchallengeable; but it is possible to give them a mistaken place and value in the scheme of religious proof. 'It is the absence of anything like a material foundation,' says Sir Oliver Lodge,[1] 'which makes the earth so secure. If it were

[1] Lecture at Midland Institute, Birmingham, October 24, 1904.

based upon a pedestal, or otherwise solidly supported, we should be anxious as to the stability or durability of the support, and we should have a royal commission sitting on it.' As it is, the earth floats securely in the liquidness of space.

The stability, balance, and order of the planet, its amazing wedlock of swiftest movement and of exquisite and unjarring equipoise, all depend, in a word, not on one specific force or fact, but on the innumerable harmonies of a thousand forces. And Sir Oliver Lodge invites us to accept this as a parable of Christianity. 'To conceive of Christianity,' he says, 'as built on any physical or historic fact is dangerous.' It is 'dangerous,' not because the facts do not exist, or cannot be proved; but because to limit the area of proof to them is to give up whole realms of other, and sometimes of nobler, evidence. Whereas to base it upon the primary facts of consciousness, or on direct spiritual experience, as Paul did, 'this,' says the great scientist, 'is safe.'

But beyond even the primary facts of consciousness, or the direct spiritual experience of this saintly spirit or that, is the argument derived from the harmony of all facts and of all experiences. And for Christianity, what better 'proof' can be asked than its profound, unbroken, multiform harmony with the laws on which the universe is built, with the facts of history, and with the unbroken spiritual experience of the race; a harmony which is expressed in a thousand forms, and can be verified in a thousand ways?

Newman, in his *Grammar of Assent*, had, long before Sir Oliver Lodge, taken much the same ground. 'Formal logical sequence,' he says, 'is not the method by which we are to become certain of what is concrete. . . . The real and necessary method . . . is the accumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review—probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be converted into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible.' 'Defenders of Christianity,' he goes on to say, 'are tempted to select as reasons for belief, not the highest, the truest, the most sacred, the most intimately persuasive, but such as best admit of being exhibited in argument, and these are commonly not the real reasons in the case of religious men.'

It is certain there are proofs of the truth and divinity of religion which lie closer to us than those formal arguments of which we have spoken, and are of quite another type. They do not need to be drawn out into syllogisms; perhaps they cannot be so drawn out. They are incidental, infinitely various, apparently unrelated to each other; seen vividly at times, and yet at other times lost to sight. They are not, perhaps, usually recognized as 'proofs,' yet their evidential value is of great and perpetually expanding scale. Literature and life grow richer in them every day. They break upon us as surprises from unexpected

quarters, they multiply as the mind grows in the habit of meditation.

It is not easy to describe them, or to assess them. Sometimes they consist of correspondences—analogies unexpectedly discovered, high as the roof of the heavens and deep as the soul of man—betwixt the physical and the spiritual; harmonies suddenly made audible betwixt faith and science, betwixt things in the material, and things in the spiritual, order. Sometimes they take the form of spiritual intuitions strangely verified; of great spiritual truths found hidden in physical facts, and suddenly breaking out from them.

Every one accustomed to think much on religious things knows how—now at this point, now at that—they grow unexpectedly luminous. An astronomer—to borrow an illustration from the physical realm—sees in the night sky a stain of white vapour. He turns the disc of the great telescope upon it, and lo! the vapour slowly resolves itself into tiny points of fire. As he still watches, these tiny points of fire expand into a constellation of stars. What was a patch of mere structureless vapour presently becomes to the wondering eye a cluster of planets, moving in majestic order through the depths of space.

And in the same way there are facts in science, or history, or in everyday life which to-day are regarded as absolutely secular. But a gleam of spiritual meaning becomes dimly recognizable in them, and they are seen to be illustrations, broken and imperfect, of divine

truth. Then as the mind dwells on them the light grows. Its area widens. What were only illustrations become analogies. They brighten into revelations.

Sometimes what we have called the unrealized logic of religion is found in a vision of the contrast betwixt the majestic structure of Christian faith, standing undestroyed while centuries pass, and the broken and forgotten shapes of unbelief which have opposed it. The centuries are strewn with the wrecks of forgotten unbeliefs, of theories intended to refute Christianity and to take its place. No one has written yet, or has written adequately, the history of unbelief; but when that is done it will be one of the most powerful arguments for faith the human mind knows. Sometimes, again, a glimpse of what may be called the whole trend of the accumulating knowledge of the race constitutes a new and hitherto unrecognized argument for religion. Who can fail to see, for example, that steadily, and with fast-growing momentum, the scientific interpretation of the universe turns in the direction of Christianity?

The purely materialistic reading of the universe is—by all serious thinkers at least—discredited. Matter in its last analysis is found to be only a mode of Force; and Force, when analysed, is the expression of Will; and Will is the quality of a Person. And so science itself, drawing aside one obscuring veil after another, is showing us—dimly seen behind all veils—the figure of a personal and ever-working Creator. We do not always see this; but when it is seen, how the vision

reinforces faith! We have only to contrast such typical scientists as Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge with, say, Tyndall or Haeckel, to realize what may be called the drift of science.

Sometimes, again, this evidence of the final truth of religion takes darker shapes; it speaks with sterner accents. It may take the shape of pain; pain that awakens suddenly, and we know not how, or whence, in the innermost chamber of the spirit; strange fears that witness to the existence of moral forces; a disquiet which has the conscience as its instrument, and the deepest susceptibilities of the human soul for its field. 'If there be a God,' says Dalgairns, 'our imagination would present Him to us as inflicting pain on the violator of His law; and, lo! the imagination turns out to be an experienced fact; the Unknowable suddenly stabs me to the heart.'

A sense of the resistless logic of religion is sometimes awakened as we realize how the accumulated witness of all godly souls, in every land and throughout every age, arrays itself on this side. John saw in vision the great victorious host of heaven, and heard the loud voice saying, 'Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ'; and that mighty and triumphant host, he is told, 'overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.' And that 'testimony' is surely an instrument of victorious power for Christianity; the witness of those in all ages, under all skies,

who have lived by it, loved it, verified it, found in it the secret of strength and of victory. And the sound of that great and accumulating testimony deepens continually. It grows in volume and majesty. Every day adds to it; every saintly life and every happy deathbed increases its authority. Who realizes that has a new and exultant sense of the truth of religion.

The strange half-seen unities, again, which run through religion, when for a moment realized, give a new and overwhelming sense of its divinity. Every one knows the subtle and persistent correspondences which link the physical universe into unity, and prove that unity. Let an atom of hydrogen be taken from the belt of Orion, or from the central sun of the Pleiades, and from a kitchen fire. They have never touched. They have no physical relations with each other. All the vast distances of utmost space part them. And yet, when tested, they yield exactly the same results! Put these two tiny jets of hydrogen flame, lit from such far-off fires, to the test of the spectrum analysis; they register themselves in the same belts of colour, in exactly the same order. They will do it always, no matter what hand applies the test.

All the duties, truths, and doctrines of Christianity have the same mysterious unity of structure. When put to an adequate test—a test that has for them the office the spectrum analysis has for light—they yield the same characteristics. And this is the scientific proof that they have one source; they reflect one creative Mind.

These incidental evidences of religion abound in secular life, and take the shape of a logic that repeats, in its own dialect, and in accents of authority, all the great demands of religion. Sometimes this incidental proof is found in the axiomatic logic of the instinctive reason asserting itself; a suddenly realized sense of what the spiritual consciousness declares, and of the finality of its witness. Sometimes it is the gift of a vision, all too rarely caught, and too easily lost, of the true perspective of history; a realized vision of centuries, and ages, and nations, and civilizations, moving under the impulse of a divine purpose and towards a divine end.

History, to sum up, is rich in these examples of what may be called the undeciphered, or the half-deciphered, logic of Christian faith. They abound in science; they meet us in everyday life. They lurk in our very senses; they whisper to us in the most secret chambers of the soul. Sometimes they shed the white light of certainty on truths hitherto only half seen. Sometimes they make the duty at our feet suddenly luminous, and clothe it with peremptory authority for the conscience. Sometimes they open an unexpected window of vision into some vast chamber of the spiritual world; they yield a glimpse of some spiritual law running through all time, and all realms, and touching all souls.

To an electrician the characteristic and proof of a 'live' wire consists in the fact that when tested, no

matter how often, at points no matter how widely separate from each other, mysterious currents of energy within the wire instantly answer, and answer in the same terms. And it may be said that history, the physical universe, the facts of our daily life, the very make of our spiritual nature, if tested adequately, give in one form or another instant and definite response; and these responses are an infinitely varied chain of proofs of the reality of religion.

To the poet's ear, as Wordsworth long ago taught us, the world is full of messages—

> The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep
> . . . . . .
> I hear the echoes through the mountains throng.
> The winds come to me from the fields of sleep

—all bringing strange meanings. To the child's eye, again, strange visions come—

> Thou blest philosopher who yet dost keep
> Thy heritage; thou eye amongst the blind,
> That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
> Haunted for ever by the eternal Mind.

But to the devout spirit, to which is linked the simplicity of the child's heart, come visions, too, such as neither poet nor child can know. The whole world at some moment grows luminous. God's very presence —not merely the print of His foot or the signature of His Hand—is on every side. The universe is a vast whispering-gallery, and the inner ear catches messages

of which the outward senses know nothing. Nature itself thus seen is written over with divine hieroglyphics.

No one has collected these incidental and suddenly realized proofs into a system; perhaps they cannot be systematized. Their spontaneity, their number, their unexpectedness, the widely separated points at which they appear, their very unrelatedness, constitute their value. But they are all of the class we have tried to describe—correspondences suddenly discovered betwixt the physical and the spiritual order, showing the same Mind behind both; analogies proving that through all realms that Mind is working towards the same ends; justifications of the terms of religion breaking in on us from the laws of secular life; vast outlines of a moral order, and of a moral purpose, shining through the entanglements and bewilderments of human history.

Is there any logic known to the human reason like the logic found in the answer of the chambers of a lock to the wards of the key that opens it? If key and lock fit, the debate ends. And to a degree which is very imperfectly realized, at a thousand points, and in a thousand ways, beyond expectation—sometimes even against expectation—this logic is arraying itself on the side of Christian faith.

The chapters which follow are designedly spread over a wide area of topics; they deal with what seem unrelated subjects, and that, the writer ventures to think, constitutes their value. Their aim is to show that when widely separated points in literature, history,

science, philosophy, and common life are tried by their relation to religion, they instantly fall into logical terms with it.

Incidentally, it may be added, the chapters are a study of what may be called opposing credibilities. Faith has its difficulties; but the incredibilities of unbelief, when tested at any point, are so vast, that their mere scale constitutes a new argument for Christian belief. There are harmonies everywhere and discords nowhere.

BOOK I

IN HISTORY

CHAPTER I

The Logic of the Changed Calendar

'Christ . . . who, being the holiest amongst the mighty, the mightiest amongst the holy, lifted with His pierced hand empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages.'—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

NO one stops to ask for an explanation of one of the strangest facts, not only in historical literature, but in the living world; the fact that all civilized time is dated from the birth of Jesus Christ. This is the twentieth century; and from what event are those twenty centuries counted? From the birth of a Jew, who, on the sceptical theory, if he ever existed, was a peasant in an obscure province in a far-off age; who wrote no book, made no discovery, invented no philosophy, built no temple; a peasant who died when, as men count years, he had scarcely reached his prime, and died the death of a criminal. And even before his death the little band of disciples he had succeeded in gathering, all forsook him and fled. This is a story written in all the characters of defeat. Yet civilized time is dated from the birth of this Jew! The centuries carry His signature, and the years of the

modern world are labelled by universal consent the 'years of our Lord.'

And no one knows how it came to be done, or when, or by whom. Not one educated man out of a thousand can tell, off-hand, why all civilized calendars are reckoned from that far-off birth in a little Jewish village. Every morning all the newspapers of the civilized world—though some of them fill their columns with attacks on Jesus Christ—readjust their date to His cradle. Each new year, as it arrives, is baptized with His name. Calendars and Acts of Parliament, business, and politics, and literature—the very dates on our cheques and letters—all are thus unconsciously adjusted to the chronology of Christ's life.

To write a human signature on Time itself, to put a human name on the brow of the hurrying centuries —this is a marvellous achievement! Caesar has not done it, nor Shakespeare, nor Newton. Genius is vain to accomplish such a task; the sword is vain; wealth is vain. But this Jew has done it! Plato was a teacher, and Socrates was a martyr, with elements of artistic interest and of human power which might be thought to surpass anything associated with Jesus Christ. Plato taught on a larger stage, belonged to a more imperial race, and spoke a richer language than the carpenter's son of Nazareth. Socrates drank the cup of hemlock to an accompaniment of philosophic discourse such as never was heard in Galilean villages. He talked the language of Homer and Aeschylus, not

the rude Aramaic of Jewish peasants. The philosophy of Plato, the dialogues of Socrates, are studied yet in all the universities of the world. But the world does not reckon its time from Plato or Socrates; from Alexander, or Caesar, or Marcus Aurelius; from Greek Olympiads or Roman Consulates. It dates its time from One who, as unbelief explains Him, was merely a Jewish peasant, and who died the death of a criminal!

Christian men as they dwell on this strange thing know that it is no accident. It is a sign writ large on Time itself, of the empire of Him who is the Lord of Time. But if we accept the theory of those who reject Christ, the very almanac of the modern world is an incredible absurdity. How does it come to pass, we repeat, that not by accident, not by some conspiracy of fanatics, not by the force of any imperial edict, but by a convergence of silent, unrecognized, almost unconscious forces, all civilized time is baptized into the name of Jesus Christ?

To have some common measure of time is, of course, a necessity of organized society; and in a thousand ways the attempt has been made to establish such a universal time-measure. But all these attempts —save one—have failed. The trouble is to find an adequate starting-point for the calendar. It must be an event, or a person, or an institution universally known; some one, or something, which has left an enduring mark on the imagination of mankind. And

the scale of the event from which mankind consents, or is compelled, to count its years, may be measured by the geographical area over which that date is accepted as a starting-point of time, and the number of centuries through which it keeps that great office. A world-shaking victory, the foundation of some many-centuried city, the birth of a dynasty or of a creed, the beginning of a revolution—such an event, it might reasonably be expected, would give time a new starting-point. And it has a curious effect to look back and see how many starting-points have been set up, were visible for a moment, and are now forgotten.

History is strewn thick with these forgotten way-marks of time—Greek Olympiads, Roman Consulates, Babylonian Eponyms. For centuries the mystic letters 'A.U.C.' were a witness that the world's time was dated from the foundation of the great city on the Tiber. One calendar dates from Alexander the Great, another from Julius Caesar. Pharsalia and Actium were battles that changed the course of history, and each in turn was taken as a starting-point for the world's almanac.

But no conqueror's sword has ever cut deeply enough on Time to leave an enduring mark. The Julian era, the Alexandrian era, the era of the Seleucidae—all have had their little day and vanished. The martyrdoms of Diocletian could not burn deeply enough into the calendar to leave a lasting mark there. The Aera Martyrum is forgotten. The Indictions of all names—imperial and pontificial—have fled like

shadows. There is for civilized men but one enduring, universally recognized starting-point of civilized time. It is that which dates from the cradle of Bethlehem!

How is this strange fact to be explained? Did a conspiracy of Christ's followers capture all the calendars of the race and baptize them by fraud into the name of their Master? No one ventures to suggest that explanation. The change was neither achieved by fraud nor imposed by authority. It does not represent the will of a conqueror, or the arts of priests, or the enactment of a despot. Most people would say, on general grounds, that we owe the christianization of the calendar to the Emperor Constantine. It was he who saw the cross in vision, surrounded by the shining characters 'In hoc vinces'; and he stamped that cross on the institutions and literature of his time. He, first of all the world's rulers, gave to Christianity official recognition.

But as a matter of historic fact he did not write the name of Jesus Christ on the calendar. The famous Indictions—or tax-periods—were his work, and in some provinces of the empire they outlasted the empire itself. Traces of them, for example, are found in France for nearly a thousand years after Constantine. But the Indictions had no religious aspect whatever; they simply marked the tax-periods in cycles of fifteen years. The most significant and impressive feature in the strange change wrought in the calendar is, indeed, the silence and the slowness with which it was effected.

The process was as independent of human will as the coming of spring, or as the rise of a sea tide—and as resistless.

The name of Jesus Christ did not emerge in the calendar till five centuries after His death, a space of time long enough for Him to have been forgotten had He been an impostor. It took another five hundred years to become universally accepted as a starting-point for historic time. And the process is linked to no single human name. Who knows, or cares, anything about Dionysius Exiguus, an obscure Roman abbot, who from A.D. 525 had begun, in his Easter tables, to count 'ab incarnatione domini'? As a matter of fact, only twelve years after the Easter tables of Dionysius Exiguus the Emperor Justinian —A.D. 537—issued a decree directing that all public documents should be dated by the year of the emperor, the name of the consul, and the Indiction, or tax-period, then current. But only four years later the last consul was elected; the office and the name alike became shadows!

Emperors and consuls have counted for nothing against the name of Jesus Christ. By A.D. 525 that name had stolen into the imagination of the world. It had stamped itself on literature. Greek games, Roman Consulates, mighty emperors, world-famed conquerors vanished like hurrying phantoms. Why should time be dated 'ab urbe condita' when Rome itself had lost both empire and fame? So A.D. took

the place of A.U.C. Only one Name survived; only one figure was visible across wide spaces of perished time. That name and figure represented the energies which were moulding human society to a new pattern; and, as a visible and concrete reflex of that fact, the world's time began to be reckoned from the birth of Jesus Christ. All that had gone before, all that had happened beside, no longer counted. By a deep, unconscious, inarticulate, yet irresistible instinct the world recognized, and recorded on its almanacs, the true starting-point of its life.

Many attempts have been made since to give another point of departure for recorded time. La Place, the astronomer, proposed to give stability and dignity to human chronology by linking it to the stars. Some four thousand years before Christ the major axis of the earth's orbit coincided with the line of the equinoxes; in A.D. 1250 they were at right angles to each other. Human time, La Place argued, ought not to be adjusted to the trivial events and vanishing names of earthly history, but to the march of the heavenly bodies. Here in the depths of space, and in the grouping of the planets, it was possible to find a magnificent and unchanging mark to which all human calendars might be adjusted. Why not make the moment from which the whole earth should count its time that at which the line of the equinoxes is at right angles to the axis of the earth's orbit? But science has not yet redated the almanac, and never will.

Islam has made a faint and broken mark on the calendar. Mohammedan nations count their time from the Hegira, A.D. 622. The Moslem almanac was drawn up by the Caliph Omar in A.D. 640, only eighteen years after the Flight; and he imposed his calendar on all the followers of Mohammed by the logic of the sword. Time for them was redated by force; and still the Hegira is confined as a time-measure to a dying creed and to a cluster of half-civilized races.

The most notable attempt in modern days to find a new starting-point for civilized time was that undertaken by France in 1793. The Revolution was to be counted as the Year One; and that ambitious calendar had many things in its favour. It undoubtedly coincided with a political new birth; and since the Revolution had great passions and forces behind it, and great ideals before it, the new date marked the beginning of an enduring movement. The world of European politics has never been the same since the Revolution, and never will be. The calendar enacted by the French Assembly had thus some historic justification, and it was adorned with all the artistic graces the lively French imagination could invent. Its months had poetical names; its festivals bore such high-sounding labels as Virtue, Genius, Labour, Opinions, Rewards. The revolutionary calendar, in brief, had for the Revolution itself the office of a flag —and it shared the fate of a flag. It fell with the cause it represented. It lasted just thirteen years;

and its only legacy to history is the tangle of names and dates with which it confuses the records of those thirteen years.

All the forces known to history, in a word, and all the ideas that have authority for the human imagination, have been employed to mark the starting-point from which the human race may count its years; and all have failed. Only one Event towers high enough above the horizon of history to serve as a landmark and a time-measure for all civilized races.

Faith, of course, sees in that deep mark on human almanacs a mysterious and, as far as human purpose is concerned, an undesigned, but all-significant, token of ownership. It corresponds to the stamp on the coin. It answers the challenge, 'Whose image and superscription is this?' It is both a sign and a prophecy; a sign that the centuries belong to Christ, a prophecy of the fast-coming hour when all that Time includes and represents shall bear His signature.

But what faith sees in the christianized calendar is, for our purpose, irrelevant. What adequate and intelligible explanation can, on scientific grounds, be given of this strange signature of a dead Jew's hand on all the almanacs of the living world? What force wrote it there? Is it a mere historic accident? Is it the result of a reasonless caprice? It is certainly not the result of any conspiracy on the part of Christian fanatics.

The line left by a wave on the sloping beach is

slight; a child's foot can efface it. But it shows where the tide has run. It is a measure of the mysterious energies, born of the movements of the planets and of the unsounded depths of ocean, which cause the tides.

And so the date on the almanac is a tide-mark, and it is the mark of a tide which has known no reflux. If a jury of historians had to explain on purely historical grounds the letters A.D., which now serve universally as a point whence civilized time is reckoned, they must report that some force, mysterious in origin and quality, and independent of human will, but with range and energy sufficient to affect all civilized nations, and persistent enough in character to run through all the centuries, has somehow put the impress of Christ's hand on history. What other explanation is possible?

Suppose some strange chemical force suddenly awoke in all the seas of the planet, crept through all their depths, and changed the tint of every wave. No one could name the moment when the change took place; no one could guess the cause. But the change was visible to man's very senses. Every wave that broke reflected the new tint. Would plain men accept as a sufficient explanation the theory that a child had by accident dropped its box of colours into the sea? Would a conspiracy of chemists explain it? What affected the colour of all the seas must be a force as wide as the sea, and as deep.

On the theory that Christ never lived, or that He

was an impostor, in regard to whom only the visible human elements have to be computed, the change in the nomenclature of time is the very paradox of history. Here is a peasant in the darkest age of the world; he lived in a subject province; he never wrote a sentence which has been preserved; he died when he had scarcely reached manhood, and he died cast out by his own race, and abandoned by his scanty handful of followers. And yet twenty centuries after he hung on the cross his birth is accepted, by believers and unbelievers alike, as the point whence all the centuries must be counted. In Jean Paul Richter's magnificent sentences, 'the crucified Jew, being the holiest amongst the mighty, the mightiest amongst the holy, has lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages.' And all our almanacs repeat in unconscious prose, and in unrhythmical numerals, that flight of stately rhetoric.

As Faith with adoring eyes looks on Jesus Christ, the cause is scientifically adequate to the effect. It is fitting that He who came to transfigure human history should put the transforming touch of His hand on the very records of Time. The Christian centuries ought to carry the signature of Christ's name. But the unbelief which rejects Christ can have no answer to this puzzle. How does it happen, it may be asked, that an obscure Jew has done what Alexander and Caesar failed to do; what it would seem an idle

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absurdity to expect Shakespeare, or Newton, or Napoleon to do?

The incarnate Son of God, the Word made flesh, who has come into the world's history to shape it to a new pattern—it is fitting that to Him all the years should pay the unconscious homage of bearing His name. The christianized calendar represents the seal of Christ's kingship on Time itself. But to believe that a remote impostor, in a forgotten province of a perished empire, stamped himself so deeply on Time as to compel all the centuries to bear his name, *is* to believe that a child, with its box of colours, could change the tint of all the oceans!

CHAPTER II

The Logic of the Keystone and the Arch

'Christian theology means philosophy become Christian.'—ILLINGWORTH.

'Pagan literature, philosophy, and mythology, properly understood, were but a preparation for the gospel. The Greek poets and sages were in a certain sense prophets; for "thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given."'—NEWMAN.

TWO stately pillars rise from separate bases. They are parallel yet distinct. They climb upward through space, course on course; but, at a certain point they curve; they converge, and approach each other. Yet they do not meet. They wait for something different from each, which will unite both. They are waiting for the keystone! Each is unfinished, imperfect, fragmentary. But the keystone completes them. It turns the fragments into a unit; it weds the separate pillars into an arch.

And there are two movements in history—Jewish prophecy and Greek philosophy—which seem parted by a very wide gulf from each other, but which fulfil the parable of the keystone and the arch. It is not usual to think of them as being twin forces in one great

history, factors in a common plan. There is, it is true, a curious agreement, in point of time, betwixt them. But by geography, language, environment, they are utterly divorced. They seem to move in different realms. One belongs to secular history, the other to sacred. One is moral, the other is intellectual. One works by the conscience, the other through the reason. One represents an aspiration after holiness; the other is the translation into historic terms of the second great hunger of human nature, the hunger of the intellect for knowledge.

Yet the two movements, though each was unconscious, through whole centuries, of the very existence of the other, are parallel. Their rise, their climax, their point of arrest coincide. Each of itself was incomplete, but at a given moment these two separate movements strangely approach. They combine. Each finds its completion in one sublime, historic event, the Incarnation. And the manner of their union, the way in which a single historic fact, the entrance into human flesh of the Son of God, fulfils both movements, is one of the strongest proofs the human intellect can ask that behind both was one divine and shaping Will.

Jewish prophecy is, of course, everywhere recognized as a movement in preparation for the Incarnation, and the long chain of verified predictions is one of the legitimate and familiar arguments drawn from history for the divinity of Jesus Christ. It is, perhaps, true that at one stage in the fight for the Christian faith

the argument from Messianic prophecies was not too wisely used. Christian apologists were too anxious to discover predictive hints and types on every page of Scripture; to catalogue specific prophecies whose fulfilment could be dated and identified. The wiser tendency now is to lay less emphasis on individual predictions, but to increase the prophetic significance of the whole history of the Jewish people. That history is a web shot through and through, over its entire extent, with Messianic predictions. The history and the literature of the Jewish nation alike are unintelligible if the whisper of a coming Messiah is not heard throughout every sentence.

The whole story of the Jewish people is the tale of a nation selected and morally trained to be the religious teachers of the race. If the Greek ideal was knowledge, and the Roman ideal social order, the Jewish ideal was religion. And the very structure of Jewish history and institutions is a great interwoven scheme of events and institutions, designed to create a vocabulary for religion; to burn in upon the human conscience the great ideas of religion: the sense of what sin means, and of what its penalty must be; the vision of holiness, as it exists in God and as it is imperative on man; a message of forgiveness, reached through a scheme of mysterious suffering, suffering vicarious in character—the suffering of the innocent for the guilty.

And, visibly, Jewish history before the Incarnation is a movement towards a sublime goal not yet reached.

Its literature shines with the fore-gleams of a revelation still to come. It is incomplete. It bears witness to righteousness, and to some approaching and perfect triumph of righteousness; but the goal is still far off.

Jewish history and religion are thus a movement towards a spiritual victory necessary for the happiness of the race and for the completion of God's plans, but impossible to man as he is, and only to be achieved by the appearance of a great and mysterious Deliverer. Looked at historically, it is, to quote Illingworth, 'a great, divine idea moving onward with infinite patience to its realization.' And the prophetic character of Judaism, it may be repeated, does not depend on specific predictions, but on the drift of the whole movement. It is all prophetic, through every syllable. It points continually forward to something better and greater than itself.

But a parallel, though widely different movement, is visible throughout the same period in the secular realm; and the Christian Church of to-day, which is slowly learning how 'God fulfils Himself in many ways,' how wide are His plans, and how surely His Spirit runs through all human history, can recognize that the great movement of the Greek mind in the realms of philosophy had a deep, if unconscious, kinship with the training of the Jewish people.

Christianity, of course, is not a philosophy; it is a religion. It is not an intellectual theory, but a life; not a discovery, but a revelation. But since philosophy

deals with knowledge as a whole, and seeks to find the underlying unity behind all facts, there must be a philosophic aspect to religion, as well as a religious aspect to philosophy. And there is in human history no more splendid chapter of intellectual effort than that of Greek philosophy, from Thales to Aristotle. All the great questions that perplex the human mind, and which are as old as the race itself, were debated in the Greek schools by the keenest intellects the race has known. The current questions of to-day—as to the relation of matter and spirit, the problem of free will, the puzzle of human personality, the nature of God, the unity of natural law, the ultimate reality lying behind all phenomena—are to be found in the literature of the Greek philosophical schools.

These problems are co-existent with the human mind; and the modern terms into which we translate them ought not to hide the essential identity betwixt the questions debated in Greek schools centuries before Christ and those over which so much ink is spilt in modern newspapers. Nothing that materialism asserts, and nothing that agnosticism denies to-day, but was asserted, or denied, in Greek philosophy more than two thousand years ago.

Now, Greek philosophy reaches its high-water mark in Plato; and philosophy with him was not intellectual merely, but intensely religious. Plato reasoned twenty centuries before Kant was born; he represents another stage in the great evolution of philosophical knowledge.

He lacked Kant's piercing vision into what may be called the roots of human personality and the essential conditions of human knowledge. But the great Greek thinker was dimly conscious of those inevitable limitations lying upon the human intellect, which Kant has taught us to recognize. The human mind can only think in the terms of its own categories. In the very act of translating sensations into perceptions, we give Truth a new aspect, and so, in a sense, miss it. The highest human duty, Plato taught, was to break free from the illusion of the senses and to reach the ultimate realities of things. And the ultimate reality of the universe is God.

Many of Plato's thoughts about God are marked by a singular loftiness. There is even a curious forecast of the mystery of the Trinity in his analysis of God under three forms: τὸ ὄν, the Cause of all things; ὁ λόγος, the Reason and Ruler of all things; and the third, the ψυχὴ κοσμοῦ, the Soul of all things. 'Nothing can be more certain,' says Pope, 'than that the trinity of personal hypostases glimmered in the writings of Plato.' 'His definition of God,' Pope adds, 'has never been surpassed in sublimity.' Light, Plato declared, is His shadow. God Himself is the Light of lights. Knowledge, Plato taught, does not lie in the senses, or in what the senses report. The world of ideas is the world of realities. What the senses deal with are but illusions. The highest Idea is the idea of goodness; and God is the ultimate reality of goodness.

Plato, in a word, taught as definitely as St. Paul that 'the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are unseen are eternal.' Truth and falsehood, he held, are radical and ultimate contradictories. 'If,' says Maurice, 'in the minutest thing Plato believes that there is a reality, an archetypal form or idea, yet he believes, also, just as firmly, that every idea has its root in one higher than itself; and that there is a Supreme Idea, the foundation and consummation of all these—the Idea of the absolute and perfect Being in whose mind they all dwell, and in whose eternity alone they can be thought of as eternal.'[1]

It is unnecessary to dwell on the defects of Plato's philosophy, and on the practical blots in his *Republic*. It is enough to note that his whole scheme of thought about the universe was profoundly theistic, spiritual, ethical; it justifies the great saying of Clement of Alexandria, that 'philosophy was to the Greeks what the law was to the Jews, a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ.' Who can doubt that the Spirit of God was at work in the Greek intellect as truly as in the Jewish conscience, and in both was moving towards one sublime goal?

But he who studies the history of these two movements will see that, at a stage almost coincident in point of time, both suffer arrest. With the Messianic prophecies of Jewish history, it was the pause in a great drama waiting for its final act. For nearly four

[1] *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, Part I, p. 49.

centuries before Christ, the voice of the prophet was hushed. The nation was waiting — though perhaps hardly conscious of its own attitude and expectation —for an event which should fulfil the accumulated prophecies of centuries; a fulfilment without which its history was a failure, its types false, its aspirations defeated. Christianity without Judaism is a rootless flower; but Judaism without Christianity is a root that never breaks into blossom. Unless the dim and splendid prophecies of Jewish history found historic embodiment, there must come the greatest defeat of human hope the literature of the race records.

But Greek philosophy, too, during the centuries immediately before Christ, suffered strange and conscious defeat. Plato himself was conscious of the limitations of the human intellect. It was capable of aspiring after truth, but incapable of reaching it. How could the human mind penetrate through all the illusions of the senses and reach the ultimate reality of things? In the *Republic* is the well-known and most pathetic Myth of the Cave. Men are pictured by Plato as prisoners in some vast and shadow-haunted cave. They are chained with their backs to a fire; they see cast on the rocky wall before them the shadows flung by their own forms and gestures, and they mistake this shadow-dance for reality. Some of these prisoners have turned their faces to the light; they toil up the steep slope to the mouth of the cave; they stand with dazed eyes in the sunlight, trying to endure

the vision of the sun itself. These escaped prisoners, struggling into the light, and trying to bear its radiance, are the highest souls of the race, its philosophers. But the mass of the race still dwelt, and must dwell, in darkness and shadows.

There finds utterance in the later writings of Plato himself, a pathetic consciousness of failure. The soul is wearied of its own aspirations. It cannot climb to God; God must, as Plato dimly sees, stoop to man; and he puts on the lips of Socrates the words, 'We will wait for one, either God or a God-inspired man, to teach us our religious duties and to take away the darkness from our eyes.' Greek philosophy, as Plato left it, is not merely a tangle of questions unanswered, of puzzles unsolved. It is a confession that the questions are unanswerable, the puzzles beyond solution.

But if there is that pathetic note of intellectual defeat in Plato's later philosophy, the defeat and the despair of human intellect itself find complete expression in the schools that succeeded Plato. In these schools we have philosophy fallen consciously bankrupt. It becomes mere Pyrrhonism, the teaching that there is nothing noble or base, just or unjust; that nothing truly exists and nothing matters. And the city which gave Socrates the hemlock, gave Pyrrho, for such teaching as this, the honours of citizenship, and for his sake exempted all philosophers from the payment of taxes!

'A despair of philosophy in its old sense,' says Maurice, 'was implied in all the later Greek schools.'

That despair finds expression alike in the teachings of Epicurus, in the doctrines of the Stoics, in the atom-dance of Democritus. The perception of any real law and standard for man had perished. The very power of conceiving the central principle of Plato's philosophy was lost to his countrymen. The later schools are, to use Maurice's words, 'the lees of Greek philosophy.' And Greek ethics, like Greek philosophy, became a mere decaying ferment, whose foulness Paul has described in terrible characters.

Then, suddenly, there came, to Jewish prophecy and Greek philosophy alike, a meeting-point—an Event that interpreted and united them both. The keystone was fitted into the arch!

One great and significant term had survived from Plato's philosophy; it was the word 'logos,' with the double sense of 'reason' and of 'speech.' In Plato's terminology the Logos was the reason, the shaping reality of all things. The Jewish mind in the century immediately before Christ had become conscious of its kinship with Greek thought, and hence the appearance of Philo, a contemporary of Christ, in Alexandria. In his writing he borrows the Logos of Plato and links it to the creative and personified Wisdom of later Jewish literature. But it is St. John who takes the word Greek philosophy had shaped, baptizes it with a Christian meaning, and puts it in the opening sentence of his Gospel.

The earlier evangelists could not have done this.

They were concerned merely with facts. The question of the relations of facts, of the philosophy underlying the facts, comes later. But John, writing in what may be called a philosophic environment, and writing, we must believe, towards the close of the first Christian century, has a vision of the inter-relations of history. He sees that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is the Logos, the shaping Reason of the universe, of whom Plato had caught a broken vision. And so he takes the term, which represents the climax of Greek thought reaching out after God, and links it with the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. 'In the beginning,' he says, 'was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' And, as a matter of fact, as we look at the Incarnation in the perspective of history, it is certain that it links together and fulfils these two great movements in the development of the race.

That the Incarnation satisfies all the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament no one doubts; but it also meets and satisfies all that Greek philosophy dreamed of, and longed for, and failed to reach. Plato, if he could have read the opening verses of John's Gospel, would have recognized his own conception; but he would have found his conception lifted up into sublime clearness, and linked to an historical event which exactly met all the needs of the human soul, as Plato imperfectly saw them; an event which, in place

of intellectual defeat and despair, gives to the soul the triumph of intellectual attainment.

The Word, John teaches, is personal, eternal; it is made flesh. Here is God descending from those heights to which the human intellect cannot climb, and giving Himself in human terms to the human soul. Here is the central Reality of the universe offered to our very senses. The great doctrine that God is love is only intelligible in the light of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; for how could God be love if eternally alone; if eternally there were not this trinity of persons in the Godhead? Plato, as we have seen, had curious fore-gleams of the multiple personality in the Godhead; but he never linked it to the great Christian doctrine, its correlative, that God is love. And though he hoped for some teacher, 'a God-inspired man, or God,' who would solve for the human intellect all the problems that perplexed and baffled it, he never dreamed of such an event as the Incarnation.

It came, indeed, in a shape neither Jew nor Greek expected. It disappointed both. To the Jew the Incarnation was a stumbling-block, to the Greek it was foolishness. Yet, as we now see, it completed the two great movements represented both by Jew and Greek. It fulfilled the Jewish ideal of a divine and perfect holiness, and the Greek ideal of a divine Wisdom, the ultimate reality of the universe. It offers both expressed in human terms. In the Incarnation we have

Messianic prophecies verified and Greek philosophy fulfilled.

In the meanwhile how did it happen that John—who was a Jew, not a Greek; a fisherman, not a philosopher—seized this great philosophical term which Plato had invented, and put it in the opening sentence of his Gospel? How did he identify the Logos of Plato with the Messiah of Jewish hope and prophecy? And, more wonderful still, how does it happen that this Jewish Messiah does, as a matter of fact, correspond so profoundly to the Logos of whom Plato debated and dreamed?

For just as it is historically certain that the Word who was made flesh satisfies Jewish prophecy, so it is intellectually certain that in the great Figure described in John's Gospel—the Word whom John declared his eyes had seen, his hands had touched—Plato would have found an answer to all the puzzles of his own philosophy. The Incarnation, if it be accepted as a fact, does answer all the questions over which Greek philosophers debated for centuries; until, in sheer intellectual despair, they turned to mere Pyrrhonism.

The Incarnation is a revelation of the Ultimate Reality of the universe. It reveals God; it reveals Him as a Person; as love, and light, and holiness. It is a revelation of the spiritual nature of man; of his place in the universe; of his significance in the sight of God. It is a supreme interpretation of duty; and it brings into the circle of human experience the moral forces which make duty possible.

Incidentally, the Incarnation is an assertion of the spiritual basis of the universe, and of the moral goal towards which it moves. It is a declaration of the fact that the whole material universe is for man, a servant, a tool, a training-ground. It is an assertion not only of the fact that God is love, but that man is His child, and is meant to stand to Him in a relationship of love.

A philosophical analysis of the meaning of the Incarnation, quite apart from the question of its historic truth, will show, in brief, that it answers all the puzzles of the human intellect. And, we repeat, how does it come to pass that in a single event, the Incarnation, these two great and apparently unrelated historic movements — Jewish prophecy on one side, Greek philosophy on the other—meet and find their fulfilment? And how did John come to discern this, and put Plato's Word in the first line of his Christian Gospel, a silent witness of the great harmony thus revealed?

All this, of course, is only to ask why the keystone fits, and completes, the arch. And who that looks at the perfect lines of the completed arch, the wedlock of unshakable strength and of reasoned symmetry it represents, can doubt that behind it is the thought of a divine Mind, working in different lands, by different forces, and, through men of different blood and speech, towards one sublime goal?

CHAPTER III

The Logic of the Missionary

'Should a voyager chance to be on the point of shipwreck on some unknown coast, he will most devoutly pray that the lesson of the missionary may have reached thus far. . . . The lesson of the missionary is the enchanter's wand.'—DARWIN.

THE Church is beginning to see the reflex value of Christian missions, though the vision is yet very imperfect. Missions call into exercise, they intensify by exercise, the central motives, the most characteristic energies and emotions of religion. They repeat in human terms that divine passion of pity, of seeking love, of love which takes the supreme form of sacrifice, which is behind the Incarnation and explains it. They measure our fidelity to all the great doctrinal conceptions of the Christian scheme: the value of man, the awfulness of sin, the range and tenderness of the redeeming purpose of God. And it may be added that if they disappeared, Christianity would lose one of its divinest credentials. For in missions, as a branch of Christian evidences, there is an unrealized force. They not only diffuse Christianity, they prove it. They are the revelation of a force

which can only be scientifically explained on the supposition that Christianity is true.

In a cluster of familiar Scripture words—words which, as Wellington put it with a soldier's insight, constitute 'the marching orders' of Christianity—is to be found the charter of missions: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' Now, a bit of literature, like a flower, cannot be separated from its environment, its climate, its soil, its root. And, tried by literary tests, these words are a paradox. They are in utter quarrel with their environment. They were spoken only six weeks after what, to the group of Jewish peasants and fishermen who listened, must have seemed the shattering and final defeat of the Cross.

We etherealize the Cross to-day. We set it in the perspective of nearly twenty centuries of victorious history. We see it, as Constantine saw it in his dream, high in the sky, with a nimbus of glory about it, while mighty voices out of unseen worlds are crying to us 'in hoc signo vinces.' But to the immediate spectators the Cross was a fact, as brutal and as tainted with shame, as to the modern imagination is the hangman's rope. It was the instrument and sign of the death of a criminal.

Yet within six weeks of—let us say—the hangman's rope, here is a message tingling with triumphant energy in every syllable, commanding the news of the death that rope has accomplished to be carried as a gospel to

the whole world! There is victory in the words, authority, the gladness of supernatural hopes. They overleap all national barriers. And, as a matter of historic fact, they proved the signal for that great march of Christianity, before which empires, and kingdoms, and creeds have gone down, which—though it has sometimes loitered—has never ceased since, and never will cease.

Looked at as a mere problem in literature, how is this strange message, out of which Christian missions have sprung, emerging under such strange conditions, to be explained? Was it the expression, in literary terms, of a delusion which had somehow captured the narrow brains of a group of affrighted and defeated Jews? But the words are in open quarrel with the whole temper of Judaism. The Jew, bound up in the narrow pride of his race, scorned the Gentile world; and history had deepened that scorn to hate. For centuries Palestine had been a doormat on which one great invader after another had wiped his feet. The Jew who had seen a Greek conqueror sacrifice a sow in the Holy of Holies, and a Roman conqueror march his legions through the gates of Jerusalem; who had seen the Holy Land broken up and oppressed by one Idumean after another—how he hated them all, Assyrian and Greek, Roman and Idumean!

He nursed his hate like a piety. He avenged himself by it for a hundred defeats, for the captivities

and oppressions of whole centuries. Its black eclipse covered the whole human race outside the men of his own blood.

Could a message like this, with its world-embracing good will, find its cradle within the narrow brows of a Jew? That is unthinkable. 'These Jews,' to quote Rousseau, 'could never have struck this tone.' Eighteen centuries of Christian history had yet to pass before the Christian conscience itself learned to spell the first syllables of that great message. Whatever the words represent, they do not reflect the genius of Judaism; they are in conflict with it. If some one discovered one of Shakespeare's sonnets hidden in some harsh Scandinavian saga; or if stanzas wearing the austere grace and charged with the lofty conceptions of 'In Memoriam,' were found embedded in some musky and sensual love-song of the East, it would not be a literary paradox more bewildering than the sound of words like these on Jewish lips. And yet, on the sceptical theory, they are the utterance, real or imaginary, of a Galilean peasant!

But the message is in quarrel, not only with the temper of Jerusalem, but with the visible facts of the moment. No one can read the words and believe that behind them is a defeated Christ; a Christ lying in Joseph's grave, with the stone yet at the door, and Pilate's seal unbroken. There are those who believe that the resurrection is a myth, and they expend pensive compliments on the body of Christ still

wrapped in Mary's spices. They say with Matthew Arnold—

> Now He is dead! Far hence He lies
> In the lorn Syrian town,
> And on His grave with pitying eyes
> The Syrian stars look down.

But no one who really believed that could have imagined, or could have uttered, the great charter which stands behind Christian missions. A dead Christ is a defeated Christ. And the note of these words is not one of defeat, but of victory, and of the exultant energy born of victory.

Huxley says that when no star yet swung in its orbit, all the worlds lay potentially in the cosmic vapour which eddied through space, and a being of sufficient intelligence might have discovered in that vapour everything there is in the world to-day, from the last winner of the Derby to the last leading article in the journals. Tennyson strikes a saner note in his lines beginning—

> Flower in the crannied wall—
> . . . . . .
> If I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

And from a flower a being of sufficient intelligence could, no doubt, deduce all that goes to produce the flower—earth and rain and sun. It needs an antecedent universe to make the flower possible. We could not explain it without taking into account all

the worlds. And in the cluster of words behind Christian missions the whole gospel comes into bloom. It needs the whole gospel to explain them.

There must be victory, and not defeat, behind them. Would it have occurred to a group of men whose leader had just died the death of a criminal, who were staggering under the shock of a disaster so great, and trembling for their own safety, to talk in accents like these? That is unthinkable. At the back of the words, to make them credible or possible, there must have been the miracle of the open grave, the risen Christ, the transfigured Cross; the miracle of a divine redemption accomplished, fulfilled, and crowned.

But if there is one set of wonders behind these words to make them possible, another set of wonders has followed them. Slowly, and by a process running through centuries, they have mastered the conscience of the Christian Church; they have coloured its ideals. And to-day, by universally admitted ethical obligation, Christianity is a missionary religion. It is a creed which, twenty centuries after its founder's death, produces missions and missionaries as naturally as a living tree, in whose woody fibres the mysterious forces of spring are stirring, produces blossoms.

And the missionaries it produces are of an absolutely unique type. Mohammedanism is a missionary religion, too, but the evangelists of Islam use the logic of the sword-blade. Their message is, 'Accept the Koran or die!' But the Christian missionary is a human

phenomenon without parallel in history. A certain measure of half-pitying contempt commonly gathers about him. He has the scantiest equipment. He carries no arms; he is clad with no civil authority; he has very little money; he is usually alone. He has only a message and a motive. The message is the story of Christ, and the motive is the love of Christ.

And, somehow, he succeeds everywhere! He works a miracle which all the resources of science, and literature, and civilization without him could not do. A pagan race, it is true, can learn the mechanical arts and borrow the dreadful weapons of civilization. Japan has done this, and has shifted the very centre of political gravity for the whole world as a result. But to create a new moral character in a people foul with the vices of heathenism, this is a miracle beyond the wit of man to accomplish. But the missionary does it! He lands on some lonely and savage isle, and, under black skins, in dull brains, in human souls made fierce with whole centuries of savage ancestry and habits, he yet creates a new character. By some strange magic he reproduces, on such strange soil, the best morality civilized lands know. In races that yesterday were heathen and savage he somehow develops many of the qualities of saints, and, not seldom, something of the temper of martyrs.

What may be called the secondary results of the missionary's work are, in their kind, marvellous. He civilizes, though civilization is not his immediate aim.

For a barbarous race with a rude and scanty vocabulary, he creates a written language. He gives them a literature, and the faculty for enjoying it. He raises womanhood; he creates homes; he draws a whole race to high levels of life. He does this under all skies and on all shores.

Now, on any reading of the story, this is a social miracle. We have many forces of a non-religious sort amongst us; but which of these could, or would, do the missionary's work? The Press is one of the great forces of civilization. It takes charge of us all; it instructs and rebukes us all; it talks in accents of infallibility which popes once used, but have forgotten. When these peculiarities have been smiled at, and forgiven, it remains that the power of the Press is both great and noble. But can any one imagine a committee of editors, or of newspaper proprietors, landing, with their presses, on some savage island and undertaking to change cruelty into love, lust into purity, and naked savagery into civilized order? For that purpose they have neither language nor message. A gospel of leading articles will not serve to turn cannibals into saints. For such a cause the Press has no vocation, and would certainly evolve no martyrs.

Science, again, is a great civilizing force; but can any one imagine, say, a cluster of biologists, or of chemists, armed with sufficiently ingenious formulae, visiting some wild shore, and undertaking to morally transform its savage inhabitants; to create ethics for

them; to persuade them to be chaste, not to kill, not to steal? Commerce, too, is one of the great forces of the modern world; but in the main it touches savage races only to destroy them. Its gospel of gin-cases is deadly. It adds to the vices of savages the yet fouler vices of civilized life.

Only Christianity, as a matter of fact, creates the missionary. It evolves him; gives him a message; inspires him with adequate motives; clothes him with strange forces. And so it visibly works that greatest of social miracles—the moral transformation of whole communities.

The whole historic record of Christian missions proves this. The modern world is their creation; it could not have existed but for them. Suppose the 'marching orders' of Christianity—lie or fact — had not been spoken, and the new creed had remained in its Jewish shell. It is certain that in that case the history of the world would have been changed. There might, indeed, have been no history! How near death the world of that day was—how corrupt in every drop of its tainted blood, how surely on the point of lapsing into universal chaos — can hardly be realized. The vileness, as of uttermost decay, of that age is written in those terrible sentences in the Epistle to the Romans. Or, if a Christian apostle must be dismissed as a witness with a bias, the same testimony is written, in characters black and ineffaceable, in the story of the later Roman Empire.

But this particular group of men, under the impulse of this real or imaginary command, betook themselves to every land. Persecution was behind them, martyrdom before them; but they carried a message which, whether fraud or fact, stirred the dying world like the call of an archangel's trumpet. And in the work of this little company of men the world, somehow, found a new starting-point, a fountain of new and exhaustless energies.

We can judge of the transforming energy of the missionary gospel by the experience of our own English-speaking race. It was not Rome—the Rome of the consuls and the emperors—that civilized Great Britain. What of order, or religion, or law Rome planted on British soil was submerged and destroyed under the wave of sea-robbers from the stormy north, and the inroads of wild Pictish clans from the Welsh hills, or from beyond the Tweed. What was it tamed those fierce piratic races; fused them into a nation, and determined the type of their civilization? J. H. Green, the historian, says that when, late in the sixth century, Augustine with his band of monks landed on the isle of Thanet—the very spot where, a century before, Hengist and his long-bearded, sea-beaten hordes had landed—it was simply the return, in another form, of Roman civilization. 'The march of the monks as they chanted their solemn litany was, in one sense, a return of the Roman legions who had retired at the trumpet-call of Alaric.'

But that is certainly not true. Augustine and his monks, no doubt, started on their pilgrimage to Britain from the steps of a church in Rome. They brought with them the tongue, and many of the usages, of Rome. But had they brought only these they would have left no mark on England. They brought—though it is true in an imperfect form—the Christian faith; and that faith awoke in our race the pulse of a strong, deep, and rich life which endures to this day. England may well be the most missionary of races, for it owes most to missions. It is nearly fourteen centuries since Augustine put his feet on English soil, but the new energy of life which the teaching of Christianity brought remains.

What is the scientific explanation of the facts here described and of the forces behind them? Every effect must have an adequate cause. To take the case of our own nation alone: is it credible that the deep religious life of Great Britain, with its manifold energies, has nothing behind it but an illusion? That is as if one announced that the Gulf Stream has nothing behind it but an exhausted, or even an imitation, water-tap! It is to offer as an explanation of the greatest force in the modern world a fraud that somehow, in spite of history, of plain facts, of fierce national prejudices, got itself, two thousand years ago, born in the narrow brains of a little cluster of Jews.

This lie had energy enough to send them round the world without money or arms, at the cost of infinite

toil and of unnumbered perils, to tell the tale of their delusion to stray travellers on the wayside, to little gatherings on river-banks or in city slums. The sword could not slay this delusion, if delusion it was, nor fires consume, nor the strength of armies stop it. What is stranger still, quarrels and betrayals, infidelities and disloyalties in a thousand forms amongst the missionaries themselves, could not arrest it. It has captured the world. Never was so prosperous a lie, and never one so beneficent! It discharges all the offices, and has all the indestructible vitality of a truth.

Surely the whole history is more wildly incredible on the theory that the assumptions behind Christian missions are false, than if we accept them as true! Do tares produce wheat, or thistles grapes? When that happens, we may believe that from the black seed of a lie there blossoms all the splendid forces and fruits of Christian missions.

BOOK II

IN SCIENCE

CHAPTER I

The Irrelevant Logic of Size

'There is surely a piece of divinity in us; something that was before the elements, and pays no homage to the sun.'—Sir Thomas Browne.

'Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed. It is not necessary that the whole universe should arm itself to crush him—a vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill him. But though the universe should crush him, man would still be more noble than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies, and the advantage which the universe has over him.'—Pascal.

PERHAPS nothing has done more to create in the general imagination the sense of God's remoteness from us, to generate a vague and paralysing scepticism, and to give to the whole theory of the universe for which the Bible stands a look of incredibility, than the contrast betwixt the littleness of man and the overwhelming vastness of the physical universe, which we owe to the discoveries of modern science. The mood of feeling itself is ancient. The writer of Psalm viii., whoever he was, put it into words three thousand years ago: 'When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man . . . ?'

That bitter question has been asked in troubled accents in every age.

But the familiar psalm, with its note of doubt, was born before the age of the telescope, and is inadequate. All of the physical heavens that the writer of the psalm knew was that tiny curve measured in it by the unassisted eye; and within the radius of the natural eye, as actual count shows, lie only some six thousand stars. The great telescopes of modern observatories multiply the range of human vision more than two hundred times; and in the dim, vast, ever-widening realms of space thus opened there burn a hundred million suns!

The application of photography to astronomical science, again, has opened new depths of space and new armies of stars, if not literally to human vision, yet to assured human knowledge. A sensitized plate is applied to the eye-piece of a telescope, in some great observatory, and the huge tube is turned to what seems an empty spot in the heavens. After long exposure, the plate is found to be pricked with thousands of tiny pin-points of white—each one the image of a star! Sometimes across the plate is drawn a faint line of white, a line which registers the track of a planet through unguessed depths of space. The human eye, even with the aid of the great telescope, fails to register the worlds thus discovered; but the worlds are there, in mighty armies.

Lord Kelvin, too, has given us a hint, drawn from

another source, of the depth and the riches of the star-filled heavens. He has, so to speak, put the tape of his mathematics round their whole circumference. He has computed the total mass of the heavenly bodies; and with the bewildering yet reasoned arithmetic science employs, he reckons that there must be a thousand million suns and planets in space!

In this measureless ocean of star-thronged space our little earth is but a pin-point. If God, says one despairing astronomer, dispatched one of His angels to discover this tiny planet amongst the glittering hosts of His stars, it would be like sending a child out upon some vast prairie to find a speck of sand at the root of some blade of grass. And what is man, with his brief and fleeting life, his politics and literature, his debates and discoveries, his insect round of work, and care, and enjoyments, when set against the background of a thousand million suns? How can it matter what he does, or what he is? He is but one of the ephemeridae. He shrinks, when set against the dreadful altitudes of space, into less than insect scale.

Stately purpose, valour in battle, splendid annals of army and fleet,
Death for the right cause, death for the wrong cause, shouts of triumph, sighs of defeat,
. . . . . .
Raving politics, never at rest while this poor earth's pale history runs:
What is it all but the murmur of gnats in the gleam of a million million suns?

No one who knows current literature, or the average

thinking of the average man, can doubt that this modern and growing consciousness of mere disproportion in scale betwixt man and the unnumbered stars which burn above him darkens the faith of multitudes. It makes God immeasurably remote, too far off for either prayer or love. How can the cry of need, or the sigh of penitence, or the whispered prayer of a child at its mother's knee, find its way through all these rushing worlds to the God who sits beyond them? These dreadful vastnesses seem to give a new incredibility to the Christian account of man's standing in the universe, and of his value in the sight of God; to the story of the love which, from the Maker of all these stars, stoops to him; to the dream of a Providence which, amid the rushing planets, still remembers him, touches him, plans for him.

The logic of relative size, it must be frankly admitted, is overwhelmingly against man, and against the Christian account of man's standing in the universe. But is that logic valid? Can we hold unshaken, and, in spite of all the discoveries of science, can we still, vindicate the Christian teaching about man and the scale of his nature?

Yes; even while we stand looking with amazed and awe-stricken eyes into these multiplying provinces of God's mighty universe, as they open before us, faith need not be shaken. The Christian reading of man and his relation to God is still credible. A little courageous thinking will show us that this logic of

mere size—the logic of the foot-rule and of the grocer's scales—has no relevancy in the realm in which man stands. It does not run in the great spiritual kingdoms to which he belongs.

We act on this belief every day in the circle of our own lives. We refuse to be bullied by mere scale. In the realm of love, for example—and that realm is the highest, the sweetest, and noblest we know—mere physical bulk has no relevance. It might almost be described as an impertinence. Will any mother consent to have the value of her child measured in inches, or assessed in pounds avoirdupois? She may be told that the house is a thousand times bigger than the baby, and this is true. But in love's realm the argument of the foot-rule does not count. In the scales of a mother's values all the Himalayas and Alps of the planet are less than her infant!

And let no one dismiss this estimate with a smile as a mere flight of feminine and unreasoning sentiment. There is an imperishable logic, the logic of the highest thing we know—of reason as well as of love—which justifies that estimate. And if love is the same in quality through all its degrees—and we are sure of nothing if we doubt this—if the love of a mother's heart is the best interpretation we possess of love in God; then, since we are God's children, and the stars represent only the brute unconsciousness of dead matter, how can we doubt our own relative value in God's judgement? How can we fear that the mere bulk of

the stars hides us from God's sight? That is to invert all rational thinking.

The discovery of the planet Neptune is a familiar story which belongs to the romance of astronomy. It was noted that at one point in its track through space, the planet Uranus swung outward from the perfect curve of its orbit. What drew the great planet from its course? Two astronomers, independently of each other, solved the problem. Some unknown mass across millions of leagues deflected the rushing orb in its course. They calculated the distance, the direction, the weight of the disturbing body, and climbing up, so to speak, on the slenderest thread of mathematical calculation, through measureless altitudes of untracked space, they *found* the new planet!

Now, tried by the test of physical size, what disproportion can be vaster than that betwixt the planet Neptune and the brain of the astronomer, who, by sheer force of reasoned logic, reached and discovered it? It is the contrast betwixt a planet still shining in the heavens and a speck of grey matter in a human skull long since turned to dust. The foot-rule, the scales, all the tests of physical measurement, all the authorities of physical values, are on the side of the planet, and against the astronomer.

But the planet was, and is, and will always be, a mass of brute, dead, unintelligent matter. It is unconscious of its own vastness. It knows nothing of the mighty curve of its path. It never felt the touch of

its Maker's hand. It can give to that Maker no tribute of knowledge or of worship. The astronomer's brain, on the other hand, was the instrument of conscious intelligence, of a capacity for sustained reasoning infinitely nobler than the mass of all the stars piled together. Nay, it was the vehicle of nobler things than even thought or knowledge. The faculty of worship was in it; it was the home of those spiritual qualities which link man to the spiritual order. It is intensity that counts, range of spiritual faculty, not mere physical magnitude. And in the scale of such contrasting values bulk is irrelevant.

Measured against the chronology of eternity, a planet is but a temporary aggregation of atoms; set against the spiritual nature of man it is a meaningless cipher! For man belongs in the last analysis to the moral order. This is his essential characteristic and distinction. He can not only think; he can love and will. His character is the field—or, it may be—of the greatest moral qualities, of love imperishable, of goodness, of righteousness. In the realm of the natural affections, as we have seen, and in the kingdom of the intellect, material bulk has neither value nor relevancy. How much more must this be true in the yet loftier world of moral character!

A certain school of scientists, it is true, would translate all forces and qualities back into material terms. The soul, it teaches, is the mere effervescence of matter. The fungus that grows unnoticed in the

field, and the genius which wrote *Hamlet*, are alike expressions of matter. The love with which a mother stoops over her infant, and the ferment of a stagnant pond in the sunlight; the worship that burns in the spirit of the saint, and the sap which stirs in the woody fibres of a tree, are all disguises of the same force, and may be assessed by like values. But this is a theory which the healthy human reason, without waiting for scientific argument, instantly rejects. We instinctively act on the assumption that it is false. In the scale of forces and values on which the universe is built, unconscious matter stands lowest; and as against the spiritual order it has no relevancy.

Man, then, may keep his self-respect even when he stands looking out from his tiny planet on the rush of all the unnumbered worlds. There is consciously in his nature something loftier than is found in Saturn, with its belt of fire, or Jupiter with its band of shining moons. In the scale of God's judgements physical mass, we are sure, can have no value as a counter. He is a Spirit; spiritual values with Him must be supreme. And we, too, consciously belong to the spiritual order.

But it is worth while noting how the very doubts as to whether God is not utterly remote from us, which science—on the argument of the scale of the physical universe—awakens, are answered by science itself, from the opposite pole of the same realm. For the latest scientific reading of the constitution of matter shows

God present in the infinitely little, in such astonishing manifestations of energy, and contrivance, and care, as almost outshine such manifestations in the physically vast.

It is asked, and doubted, whether God can come down to our poor level. Can He think of such an insect as man? Are we not too small to be so much as visible in the mighty landscape of God's universe? Now science itself answers that challenge. It shows us God stooping not merely to the man, but to the atom. It sees Him hanging in the tiny curve of a molecule a whole system of stars, as wonderful in their very want of scale as Arcturus and Orion are in their vastness of scale.

It is not simply that the microscope is the correlative of the telescope, so that while one reveals the wonders of the physically vast, the other unveils the marvels of the physically minute. What we yesterday thought to be the ultimate forms of matter have been broken open, and we see shining within the infinitesimal horizons of the molecule a whole system of stars; inconceivably minute points of electric energy moving in orbits like the stars, and with an ordered speed that equals theirs. And this is God's work! He sets us betwixt two firmaments—a firmament of planets in the dreadful height of the heavens above us, a firmament, sown as thick with starry electrons, in the atoms under our feet. By measureless degrees below the farthest reach of the telescope, in terms of a

minuteness which only the symbols of mathematics can express, God is revealed working with an order, a greatness, an energy of power, a splendour of contrivance, before which the human imagination droops.

If a dewdrop were expanded to the size of a planet, the molecules of hydrogen of which it consists would resemble, says Sir Oliver Lodge, oranges or footballs. How many 'oranges' would it take to constitute a bulk equal to that of our planet? And as many inconceivably minute molecules of hydrogen are packed into the mass of a dewdrop. And yet within each such molecule science now discovers a stellar system which is not only the reflex, in infinitesimal terms, of the solar system, or of the Pleiades, but, by reason of its very minuteness, is more wonderful than they. It is a reproduction, in terms of the inconceivably minute, of the splendour of the physically vast.

Science thus, in the terms of its own logic, proves that with God material vastness has no significance. All that we find in the majesty of the planets—their order, their speed, the perfect curve of their orbits—we find repeated in the molecule. Does God, as doubt whispers, sit far off from us in the dreadful height of His heavens, amongst a thousand million stars, with Orion and the Pleiades at His feet, too concerned with them to listen to us? Science itself shows that God does not come down merely to where we stand. He goes down by distance immeasurable, below our feet.

He is present not merely in the dust grain and the atom, but in the electron.

God in the infinitesimal, hiding His wonders there, working His miracles of power there, as much as in the infinite! This is the message of science. The order of the material universe is a mighty chain which runs upward to heights of which David never dreamed; but it runs downward to depths of which, yesterday, science itself had no thought. It is a chain of ordered magnificence with the planet at one end, the electron at the other, and God at every link.

Christ, it will be remembered, sanctions—nay, He enjoins—this appeal to the near, the minute, and the commonplace, as an answer to the doubt of whether we have any value in God's sight. Is Providence concerned about our little lives? Christ points us to the falling sparrow, to the blades of trodden grass; God's thoughts come down to these. Nay, if unbelief bids us consider the heavens to learn our insignificance —how little God must care for us, Christ bids us consider the most trivial things of earth—the lilies, the grass, and the sparrow—to learn how God cares for things immeasurably lower in Nature's scale than we are. He appeals, moreover, to what, we are tempted to think, is the least important quality in vegetable life, its grace of form and beauty of tint, and bids us find in these the most intimate signature of God's thought.

There is a leaven of Puritanism, and of the Puritan

mistrust of beauty, in much of our Protestantism. We are accustomed to say that 'God does not care for the mere look of a thing'—a very deplorable heresy indeed! It is this very thing—the 'look' of the lily, *how* God clothes the grass of the field—Christ bids us 'consider.'

The great Maker and Lord of all the stars thinks it worth while to paint a splendour beyond the wardrobes of kings on the perishing leaf of a flower that blossoms only for a day. And this is only a sample of God's methods. He pours into the tiny cup of a violet a purple that mocks the splendour of kings. He mingles for the rose its rich and exquisite tints. Nay, that dainty perfume, which beats itself out in such exquisite pulses of scent on the air from every flower, and which has no other 'use' than the giving of pleasure, is God's contrivance. Here is a revelation not only of God's methods, but of God's values, written on the trodden grass, on the worthless dust beneath our feet. And Christ bids us 'consider' these things to learn how God cares for things of immeasurably less value than we are.

And science, as we have seen, reinforces with its discoveries exactly that lesson. Yesterday it seemed to give energy to unbelief by the argument against man's value drawn from the vastness of the material universe. To-day it is on our side, against the tyrannous scale of matter. It repeats with triumphant accents all the arguments for faith in our own

significance by showing that God finds a place in His plans and field for the exercise of His utmost omnipotence, in terms of physical minuteness beyond the range of the microscope itself.

If the question of physical scale, in a word, is to count, we must measure ourselves against, not the planet, but the molecule. For God is more wonderfully present to even the gaze of science in each molecule, than He was to the eyes of adoring multitudes in the Shekinah of the Jewish temple.

CHAPTER II

The Logic of our Relation to Nature

'Every action of the human free-will is a miracle to physical and chemical and mathematical science.'—Lord Kelvin.

'We are conscious of being able to originate action, to initiate events, even in a measure to modify the processes of nature, in virtue of our free-will or power of self-determination. And what we demand, therefore, in a First Cause, is analogous to what we find within ourselves and nowhere else.'—Illingworth.

ONE of the most familiar, far-spread, and confident forms of unbelief is the theory that the miraculous is essentially and hopelessly the incredible. It is not that, historically, the evidence for this miracle or that is insufficient; but the order of nature—stately, majestic, unvarying; moving in rhythmical sequences of unbroken law towards changeless goals—is looked on as fatal to the whole conception of miracles. The natural blots out the supernatural.

Hume's famous argument against miracles — or, rather, that section of it which is best remembered—is that they are unprovable. He challenged boldly the possibility of a miracle, and yet more subtly and confidently its communicability. The evidence of any

particular group of witnesses to a specific miracle, he argued, must be less than the silent and general consensus of all history, and of general human experience on the other side. So the value of affirmative testimony on one side of the equation must, in every instance, be less than the value of the negative testimony on the other side.

But the new mood of scepticism lays greater emphasis on the other branch of Hume's argument. Miracles are not merely unprovable, they are impossible. The natural order, as science interprets it to us, fills the whole circumference of the horizon. The supernatural is a dream, not to say a discord.

Now, the general weight of logic on the side of the miraculous—or, rather, to use a better term, of the supernatural—is stronger than is generally realized. There is what may be called the direct Christian reply. Miracles are made credible by their context, and cannot be separated from their context. They form part of a great history which attests them, and which is unintelligible without them. Their context is the whole redemptive scheme of Christianity. They are, on the Christian theory, incidents in the life of a supernatural Teacher and Saviour. It is not merely that they were needed as credentials. Granted that there broke in on human history—a history disordered by sin—the figure of a divine Person, Himself completely out of the natural order, it was inevitable that this sudden emergence of the supernatural would

register itself at a hundred points in events out of the natural order.

The old crude, not to say false, definition of a miracle described it as 'a suspension, or violation, of the ordinary laws of nature.' Most of the objections against miracles hold only against this false conception of them. In the sense of a 'violation of the natural order,' sin is the true miracle. It is essentially a breach of the divine order of the universe, and Christ's acts of supernatural healing are the restoration of law to its kingdom; the arrest of that disorder in man's physical nature which sin produces. His miracles are not a breach of the divine order, but its reassertion. They are prophetic hints, in physical terms, of the great ends of His redemption.

It is usual to say that the act of forgiveness which Christ claimed to perform, and upon which still hangs all human hope, was a miracle in the spiritual order. Luther was accustomed to call conversion 'the greatest of all miracles'; and the logic which rejects Christ's power to work miracles in the physical order is equally fatal to His claim to work miracles in the spiritual order. For law is a unit. It is as absolute—if absolute at all—in the spiritual as in the physical realm. But forgiveness, too, looked at properly, is not a breach of spiritual order, but the restoration of an order already broken.

There is, again, what may be called the direct scientific defence of miracles. It is certain that on

the severest scientific reading of the universe we cannot blot out the miraculous. There is always what De Quincey calls the *a priori* miracle, the beginning of life. Life must have been originated at some given moment, and by some specific act; for the theory of an eternal unoriginated race—a chain with no first link—is a theory more confounding to the human mind than any miracle can be. That life exists we know. That there was a time on this planet when it did not exist we are certain; for within a period which science can measure the earth was, as all science declares, a red-hot molten globe, on which no life could exist. There must have been a moment when the first pulse of life stirred. Whence did that pulse come?

Not, it is scientifically certain, from dead matter. It must have sprung from the entrance into the circle of phenomena of an absolutely new force. The supernatural, that is, must have broken in on the natural. Every pulse in our own veins thus runs back into the miraculous. Life began in a 'miracle'; it is itself the great miracle. Wallace, indeed,[1] claims that there are at least three stages in the development of the organic world where some new cause of power, from outside that world, must necessarily have come into action.

Darwin, it is true, whittles down the supernatural, which must lie at the roots of life, to the smallest possible size. He stipulates for 'life, with

[1] *Darwinism*, p. 274.

its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms, or into one.' But the notion that the smaller the miracle is the more credible it becomes is absurd. Christ multiplied five loaves and two small fishes into a meal for five thousand people. Would the miracle have become more credible if at its basis lay twice as many loaves and fishes? If out of 'a few microscopic forms, or even one,' could be evolved all the crowded life, the sea of living energy, which fills the living world to-day, how much of miracle must have been packed into those two or three primary cells! The miracle becomes not less, but greater, as we reduce in scale the original starting-point.

To-day, it may be added, almost as certainly as in that far-off sublime moment on the cooling earth, when the first pulse of life stirred, a miracle lies at the root of life. Or if we cannot postulate a miracle, still the origin of life constantly runs back into a mystery so profound that it suggests the miraculous; and science itself is so dumb in its presence that at least, it may be claimed, it has no authority to deny the miraculous. Here is a tiny speck on the very border line of the invisible. It is too minute for analysis; it baffles all tests. But what strange powers are hidden in that almost invisible mote! It levies tribute from land and water and sky. It takes fibre from the earth, colour from the sun, energy from the gases of the atmosphere, and builds up its strange architecture of

organs and faculties. And before the whole process Science stands with wondering eyes and silent lips. It has no explanation for what it sees. What miracle could be so completely beyond the possibility of explanation as the force which lies at the root of every form of life!

But if the general vague doubt as to the miraculous be analysed, it will be found to consist of certain pre-suppositions which are demonstrably false. There is, first, the assumption that God has emigrated from His universe. He touched it once to set it going; He placed on the cooling globe at least those 'two or three' living germs into which was packed all life, and all history, and all literature. But since then He no longer interferes with the universe He has set going. The second pre-supposition is that natural law is something sacrosanct; it is a changeless, imperative, and ascertained order; an order which is an end to itself, and which it is a mere folly to think can ever be changed to serve any end outside itself. The third pre-supposition is that man, and all that man represents, count for little in the system of things. It is absurd to think that his welfare can weigh for an instant in the scales of cosmic values. The physical universe, with its supposed order, its network of inexorable and unconscious laws, is the supreme fact in the universe. The supernatural is irrelevant, incredible, something lying outside the very domain of science.

That God is distant, that man is little and irrelevant,

that nature—meaning by 'nature' the great circle of physical phenomena—is great, these are the three unspoken assumptions in the great argument against miracles. And it may be said with the utmost confidence that these three pre-suppositions are in conflict with both science and common sense. They result from looking at the whole universe in a false perspective.

That the so-called 'laws' of nature are nothing more than observed sequences of events has become almost a platitude; and yet round the phrase 'natural laws' still hangs a false authority which is an offence to science. 'A law of nature in the scientific sense,' says Huxley, 'is the product of a mental operation upon the facts of nature which come under our observation, and has no more existence outside the mind than colour has.' 'Law,' says Newman,[1] 'is not a cause, but a fact. When we come to the question of cause, then we have no experience of any cause, but will.' The notion of natural laws as categories of imperative force may certainly be dismissed as unscientific.

The notion, too, that God has emigrated from the physical universe, that the touch of His hand is to be discovered, not in the living world of to-day, but only at some far-off point in the measureless past, may be put aside with a smile. That is not the Christian theory. 'My Father worketh hitherto,' said Christ,

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 69.

'and I work.' 'A concluded creation,' says Fairbairn, 'could only signify an exhausted universe and a dead deity.' Christian doctrine asserts the presence of the ever-working God in the living universe about us. Science, on its physical side at least, is not entitled to have any theory on the subject; yet all the great scientists are on the side of theology in this matter. They believe in the divine immanence. 'Look,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'for the action of the Deity, if at all, then always; not in the past alone, not only in the future, but equally in the present. If His action is not visible now, it never will be, and never has been visible.'[1] Even that school of science which almost persuades itself that God does not exist, or which attenuates Him into a vague impersonal mystery, yet believes that if He exists He fills the universe.

Herbert Spencer, who banishes God from human knowledge as being for ever inscrutable, has to bring back God in the shape of an Energy, in order to keep the universe going. Through all the mysteries, the half-knowledge of life, 'there remains,' he says, 'the one absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed.' It is not a remote or purely historic Energy, but one in whose presence we, and all things, stand every moment. An 'Energy' which has set the universe going, and then departed from it, is to science itself unthinkable.

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, vol. i., No. 2, Jan. 1903, p. 214.

But the best defence of miracles—or, rather, of the supernatural, which is the true underlying issue—is found in the latest scientific reading of the whole relation betwixt the material and the spiritual. A shallow and unscientific interpretation of the universe, even if it admits that the supernatural and spiritual, as well as the physical, exist, puts wide intervals of time and measureless gulfs of space between them. They belong to separate realms. They are in discord. If they touch the natural is broken.

Now, it is not enough to say that the natural and the supernatural, the physical and the spiritual, are concurrent; that we cannot conceive of one without the other. On the severest scientific reading of the facts of the universe, it is fused with spirit. It is intelligible only by the help of spirit. And through all its phenomena, from the highest to the lowest, the physical is the servant of the spiritual. In Locke's psychology the human mind was simply a mirror which reflected the image of the external universe, brought to it by the senses; and Hume's scepticism was built on Locke's psychology, for he taught that the mind itself was nothing but a chain of such images without reality in them.

But the profounder psychology of Kant taught that the mind is a laboratory, transforming what it receives from the external universe into some new thing. The mind receives through the eyes invisible vibrations of ether, and translates them into colour; nerve-waves,

and transmutes them into form. We have been imagining, he says, space outside us, and have tried to find it in things; but it is not in them, it is in us, involved in our method of contemplating substances. Time and space are categories of our own mind.

All this sounds obscure and mystical, but we can verify it for ourselves. Where is colour? Not in the sunset, in the snow peaks, in the purple sea, the soft green of the landscape, the blowing poppies. It is in us! Vibrations of mysterious ether—that ether which the latest guess of science whispers must be the ultimate stuff out of which the whole visible universe is made—strike with varying degrees of intensity upon the sensitive lens of the eyeball; and somewhere betwixt the eye and the grey matter of the brain—somewhere on that strange and unmapped border which lies betwixt the spirit and matter—a strange thing takes place. The vibrations report themselves to our consciousness in the purple of the violet, the flush of the rose, the glory of the sunset, the majesty of the far-off hills.

No one can so much as guess how it is done. 'The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness,' says Professor Tyndall, 'is unthinkable.' But the passage takes place. And all the harmonies and discords of sound, all the majesty of form and splendour of colour in the external universe, is thus literally the creation of our own mind. Science, when it analyses the material world, discovers in it nothing but atoms and vibrations, energies and

sequences; it knows nothing of flame in the sunset, of sound in the vibrating air. Colour, it declares, is the creation of the eye, or of the mind behind the eye; sound of the ear, or of the mind behind the ear. Spirit, that is, translates matter into its own terms before it can be so much as known.

Beethoven, as every one knows, in his later years was deaf. No whisper of sound reached his consciousness. But in the forum of his mind he wove the exquisite web of melodies unheard by himself, and, as far as his own consciousness was concerned, with no relation to sound. Music, his case proves, is a phenomenon of mind, not of matter.

All this is but the A B C of psychology. 'Colour,' says Fairbairn,[1] 'does not inhere in things; Nature, by herself, is without it. It is there because man is there and possesses that sense by which it is not simply perceived, but, in a sense, constituted.' Nature gives us, in brief, the raw material of colour, of sound, of physical form. We bring it into perfect existence in the laboratory of the brain. Nature in her own right is, if not a void, yet at most a mere aggregate of mechanical properties. 'Her pomp of beauty, her voice, and all her harmonies she owes to mind. We receive from her what we have given to her, and without them she would not be what she is.'

The very order' of nature, on which so many eager disputants insist as an argument against the spiritual,

[1] *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 33.

is itself a purely spiritual product. 'Atoms,' says Illingworth,[1] 'combine in mathematical proportions. Stars move in their courses by mechanical rule, organic life in plant and animal is minutely and elaborately teleological.' But these links are not mechanical; they are spiritual.

The 'order of nature' thus is a combination of two elements, matter and spirit, set in a certain relation; and that relation, from the dust of the physical universe to its very crown, is one service on the part of matter to spirit. Matter is what moves in space, spirit is that which thinks, and wills, and loves; and, as may be tested at any point, matter never uses spirit, but spirit always uses matter. Illingworth has wrought this out in matchless demonstration in his *Divine Immanence*. 'If matter,' he says, 'lay at our feet as a thing to be left or employed at will, we might regard its use as accidental. But its fusion with spirit is, in fact, far too intimate, its correlation too exact, to admit of any such idea.'[2] Spirit and matter are linked together, but matter exists for spirit, not spirit for matter.

What we find about us, then, is not a majestic order of physical structure, bound together by iron laws, to which spiritual ends are irrelevant, and weighed against which man, with his brief life and petty troubles, is but as an insect weighed against a planet. If this were so, it might be contended that it is foolish to suppose that the order of nature could be arrested, or

[1] *Divine Immanence*, p. 59. [2] Ibid., p. 8.

diverted, in the interests of man. We live, on the contrary, in a universe in which, at every point and throughout every moment, spirit rules matter; claims as of right to govern and never to serve matter; and in which matter is adjusted to spiritual ends.

If, then, the assumption underlying a miracle is that at some given point, in some specific event, the laws of matter were made the servants of some spiritual end, this is not in conflict with what may be called the scientific reading of the usage of the universe. It is in profoundest harmony with it. For throughout all the categories of that universe matter is fused with spirit, and is the servant of spirit. The whole material universe, in brief, is set in exactly that relation to spiritual ends and forces for which miracles stand.

All this, however, may seem to the man in the street somewhat academic, if not unintelligible. He does not understand psychological laws, and if told that the glow of sunset in the western sky does not really burn there, that its fires are lit in the cells of his own brain, is apt to be bewildered and incredulous. He is still more puzzled, if not sceptical, when told that time and space exist not outside him, but within him. Even a philosopher must admit that time does in some sense exist; for if we acted in practical things on the theory that it is an illusion, then, as Sir Oliver Lodge reminds us, we should never catch a train!

Is it possible to translate the psychological argument for the empire of the spiritual over the material into

easier and nearer terms? Is there any reply to the argument against miracles that lies close at hand; that can be easily understood; that appeals to common sense and is justified by plain facts? If so, this will supply for the man in the street the answer to the attack on miracles which he wants.

And there is such an answer. It lies in our own consciousness; in the plainest facts of the everyday world; in that relation to the external universe in which we are conscious we stand, and of which our very senses are the judge. If we consider, we shall find that we have ourselves a certain relation to natural order, which is shared by no other form of life known to us. We are part of the material system of things; yet, somehow, we stand above it; we can study it; we can set it in perspective, as though we looked at it from another realm; we can read its secrets, put our hand upon its forces, master it, make it take for us the uses of a tool. We can put its laws into new combinations, and compel them to be the servants of our thoughts. We can use its energies to produce results which, to the whole system of things without us, would be impossible.

And the reason is that we are free, personal, reasoning spirits, moving amongst the forces and laws of material nature as the master of a great factory moves amongst its flying wheels and travelling belts. They are our servants. The sequences of nature are to us mere tools. We cannot alter them, but we can

make them pliant to our will. A thousand illustrations leap up at once to show that we ourselves have power, without violating natural order, to produce results outside that order and impossible to it.

It is a law of nature, for example, that iron shall sink in water. It took a miracle to make an axe-head float. But the modern shipbuilder will take ten thousand tons of iron, mould them to a certain shape, put within them one of the simplest physical forces, and so we have the spectacle of a great iron-clad that not merely floats, but travels across the surface of the yielding sea with the ordered speed and momentum of a railway train. All the forces of nature put together would never build the ironclad. When man's shaping brain and faculty of controlling will are added to the process, the 'supernatural' instantly emerges.

The air-currents floating through the pipes of an organ are a purely natural force; but not all the air currents that ever blew, not all the 'laws of harmony' ever tabulated, would produce the 'Hallelujah Chorus.' But mind, working through the cells of the musician's brain, bids these air-currents flow in certain measured pulses; and lo! the majestic harmonies of Beethoven and the stormy choruses of Wagner are created!

It is possible to say that a great bridge represents the triumph of physical energy; but 'shall we seek that energy,' asks Sir Oliver Lodge, 'in the tin cans in which the navvies bring their breakfast, or in the mind

of the engineer?' It is a familiar story how a famous engineer used the energy of the sea-tides to lift the huge tubes of the Menai Bridge to their place on the summit of the mighty stone piers. Great iron caissons were floated into position at the base of the piers. Each returning tide lifted them a certain height; the 'lift' was captured and secured, and, foot by foot, to the pulses of the sea, the vast masses of iron rose to their place.

Now, behind the sea-tides was a sequence of forces running to the farthest planets, and to the remotest ages of time. The physical energy of the whole material universe, in a sense, was in them. Yet they would never have built the Menai Bridge. To this great and ordered procession of natural forces must be added one tiny but tremendous *plus*—the brain of the engineer! Then the bridge becomes possible. It rises as the result of the energy of natural forces, but the result is impossible to that energy alone.

A parable of the relation of the human mind to nature might be extracted, as Sir Oliver Lodge tells us, from the time-table on which a train runs. The train itself, travelling on fixed iron lines, and driven by unconscious mechanical forces, is a mere congeries of physical and unintelligent energies. The time-table is the mind of the director expressed in certain symbols, running ahead of the train, determining with varying adjustments at what speed the train shall travel, when and where and for how long it shall stop. It is a picture

of mind acting in advance on mechanical sequences, and using them to reach an object which is outside them. 'Take a train,' Sir Oliver Lodge says, 'running through a savage country, moving, say, on the Cape to Cairo railway, without stopping. Natives on the route would come to regard it in time as a sort of force in nature, which moved through their country inexorably, and could not be stopped. They would come presently to suppose that it obeys fixed laws—as, indeed, it does—and that it is unchangeable. If they were told that it was arranged in the directors' board-room, and they were sceptical and intelligent, they would say, "That is all nonsense. The thing goes because there is fire and steam." They would say, "What do you mean by a miracle? It goes by perfect law and regularity, and miracles do not happen." Yet they might be told that, if they wanted the train stopped, a petition conveyed to the board-room might get the train stopped. They would certainly be sceptical about that. Still,' says the great scientist, dryly, 'perhaps it might be managed by methods of which they were not aware.'

One explanation of miracles may certainly be found in that parable of the train and the time-table. God's time-table of natural sequences may include the emergence of the miracle. Time, for Him, is non-existent: sequences do not exist; all events for Him are present. But a larger and better reply is found in the assertion that in our own relation to

natural law there is a hint of God's relation to His universe. He cannot have a more remote relation to His own works than He has given to us. It is incredible that He has devised for us, and bestowed on us, a freedom of action, a power to use all natural forces as the immediate servants of our personal intelligence, which He does not Himself possess.

He who has made us the masters of the physical laws of the universe cannot Himself be their servant. God must possess in the scale of His own infinite nature, and throughout the fields of His vast universe, that present, personal, absolute mastery over the forces and sequences of His works which we, in the scale of our brief lives and of our limited powers, possess. It is not that once He built the machine and set it going, and then left it. He is for ever present. There is no point in space and no moment in time at which, and in which, He is not at work. His will, in the last analysis, is the great driving energy of the universe. And if that be so, the whole question of miracles is settled. They are reasonable, natural, and inevitable.

God does not, it is true, act on caprice. He does not 'violate His own laws'; nor is any such 'violation' needed to produce results above those laws. It is the obedience of His laws, not their violation, which makes the miracle possible. The natural and the supernatural are concurrent. The physical is covered over its whole area by the spiritual, as the elastic atmosphere covers, over its whole area, the surface of the

sea. And God does not sit inert and careless, or, perchance, asleep, in His own universe. This, says Sir Oliver Lodge, is 'a law-saturated cosmos.' And what we call law is but the action of the creative Mind on the forces He has called into existence.

And, granted the personal Mind of the Creator in His own creation, miracles are possible. 'Once admit of God,' says J. S. Mill, 'and the production of an effect by His direct volition must be reckoned with as a serious possibility.'[1] The only logical alternative to a belief in their possibility is, as Huxley frankly admitted, blank, unqualified atheism. And that is a theory more profoundly abhorrent to the sane intellect than belief in all the miracles the Gospels record.

[1] *Essays on Religion*, p. 230.

CHAPTER III

The Logic of Verification

'The man of science has learned to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification.'—HUXLEY, *Lay Sermons.*

'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. . . .'

IN one of his letters St. John takes up the exultant phrase 'we know,' and claims it for religion. Again, and yet again, in accents of triumphant certainty, he repeats it. 'We know,' he says, 'that we are of God.' 'We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding.' 'We know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ.' For him, as his spiritual experience deepened and life drew to its close, religion became an august realm of verified certainties. Over all the vital doctrines of the Christian faith he writes that great and challenging affirmation, 'we know.'

And yet multitudes of sceptics will say to the Christian, 'That is exactly what you do *not* do! You dream; you imagine; you hope; you believe. The dream is fair; the imagination is noble; the belief has a certain air of plausibility; the hope might well be envied. But you never get beyond the misty horizons

of faith, and faith is less than knowledge; less sure, less safe. It comes short by unmeasured distance of certainty.' The whole interval, indeed, betwixt religion and science, many people think, lies at that point. The man of science knows; the man of religion merely believes. Religion, its critics say, is a kingdom of credulities. It is at best a realm of unverified speculations. But science is a world of certainties!

And the secret of the triumphant certainty, audible, for the general ear, in every accent of science, lies in that word 'verification,' which Huxley uses. The scientist can translate his theories into concrete shape at will. He can test them by an appeal to fact. He can produce and reproduce a given and specified result under given and exact conditions.

Does any one doubt that all the primary colours lie hidden in each ray of white light? A boy with the help of a broken bit of glass may repeat Newton's experiment, and splinter the shining pencil of soft white light into the rainbow. That water, at a certain temperature, becomes vapour, and at another temperature turns into a solid, is a doctrine of science which can be verified at will. A chemist discovers that a given solution will crystallize into a certain form, and reports the circumstance. Nobody need take the discovery on trust. Any chemist in his laboratory can prepare the solution, and watch how in the precipitating fluid the angles of the coming crystal shape themselves, until the perfect crystal emerges.

The whole strange mystic process reports itself to the senses, and will report itself as often as anybody chooses to repeat the experiment. A given metal, tried by the spectrum analysis, registers itself in certain colour-lines, arranged in a certain order; and as often as the experiment is repeated, by no matter what hands, on the light yielded by that metal, taken from any source, the same spectrum emerges. Behind all the propositions of science, in a word, is the great law of the uniformity of nature. All separate facts run back into that uniformity, and express it. And so science stands, it is claimed, on a solid foundation of verified and constantly verifiable results.

How far this claim for science is true is discussed elsewhere. Meanwhile, in the mysterious realm of religion are such verifications possible? Can its truths be translated into concrete form at will? Can they be put to the test of actual experiment, and survive the test? Dare the Christian believer take up Huxley's words, as well as Paul's, and say that he believes in justification, not merely by faith, but by verification? Do we reach in the spiritual realm, in a word, the height of that great certainty which enables the soul to say, not merely 'I believe,' but—a more triumphant assertion yet—'I *know*'?

It is true beyond all possibility of serious denial that the seal of a genuine verification can be put, and is daily put, on the doctrines of Christianity. Under certain conditions they are countersigned, both by the

personal consciousness of the believer, and by the visible facts of the world.

Verification for a chemist consists in putting together the elements of a given formula so that they produce, and always produce, a result which can be predicted. Let the process be translated into spiritual terms. Let us imagine that into the soul of a thief the great forces of religion are, somehow, introduced. Something will instantly and inevitably follow. He will steal no more! The thievish fingers will forget their evil art. Let us suppose that a fallen woman from the street comes under the forces of religion, and is converted. In the defiled soul of that woman a strange white flame of chastity will instantly begin to glow. Vice will become hateful, purity imperative. The harlot of yesterday will become to-day, if not a saint, yet a soul under the law of saintly forces.

Let the missionary go with his New Testament to some cluster of savage tribes set on a reef-girdled island in the Pacific. 'The lesson of the missionary,' says Darwin, 'is the enchanter's wand.' It is always the enchanter's wand! It will not only create civilized habits, call a written language into existence, make commerce possible. It will slay lust and cruelty; it will make the savage gentle, the cannibal humane. The proof of this is written in history and on every page of the actual world.

These experiments, of course, cannot be tried at will, for merely dialectical purposes, or at the bidding of a

scientific curiosity. You cannot catch your thief and inject Christian principles into him, with a hypodermic syringe, as you inject drugs. You cannot inoculate your harlot at will, and with a lancet. Christianity can only be applied under its own conditions and laws, and these conditions are personal to the subject. They are conditions, not of scientific curiosity in the operator, but of moral surrender and trust in the personal soul to which Christianity makes its appeal. Huxley's famous proposal to apply a prayer-test to a given ward in a great hospital showed, on his part, a complete ignorance of the real nature of prayer, and of the spiritual laws which govern it.

It can be no complaint against religion that it must be tested under its own conditions. That is true of every verification of science. Each phenomenon has its own laws, and must be dealt with in harmony with those laws. But when the conditions of religion are satisfied, that certain results follow, follow inevitably and instantly, is beyond challenge. History may be put into the witness-box to prove it; the visible facts of the world attest it.

But let us go a step farther. It may be claimed that, with uncounted multitudes of men and women to-day, religion stands, as a personal experience, in the category of verified truths. They do not simply believe, they *know*. They know by the surest evidence on which truth can be built—the certitudes of consciousness.

Millions of living men and women, for example, have undergone the process called conversion. They can recall the moment when, the place where, they yielded themselves to Christ. They hold still in vivid memory the phenomena and emotions which followed: the sudden rush of joy; the thrill of spirit touching spirit; the changed perspective of life; the sense of new relationships awakened; the empire of new motives suddenly established. And the essential identity of this great experience in myriads of lives, under the widest possible diversities of temperament, of education, and of environment, is a scientific phenomenon of the most impressive sort.

The experience is as old as authentic history, and yet as new as the last sunrise, or as the dews lying on to-day's flowers. It is not confined to poets and mystics, to monks and dreamers; the witnesses run through all ranks of life, all diversities of character, and all generations of time. They range from John and Paul, from Augustine and à Kempis, to Pascal and Luther, to Gordon and Havelock. How do exactly the same phenomena emerge under conditions so unlike; in scholar and peasant, in little children and in learned men, in Augustine in the fifth century, and in John Smith in the twentieth century?

To many, it is true, religion does not report itself in any sudden rush of deep emotion, at some clearly dated moment, of the character described. But they know as a present fact, a fact verified from moment to

moment in their consciousness, that religion is true; that, being accepted, it produces certain results in character and life. For them religion is not a theology, a history, a ritual, a hymnology. It is not even a scheme of ethics. It is a life, with all the forces, the self-conscious energies, and the quick susceptibilities of life. It is a living relationship to a personal God; and the relationship is as vivid and definite as any tie that links one human being to another.

And all this knowledge, it is to be noted, stands on a foundation of evidence at least as sure as our knowledge of the external world itself. Our knowledge of the existence of the world of colour and form is only an act of faith in the veracity of the reports brought by the senses. It is but the translation into perception —wrought we cannot tell how—of certain nerve-vibrations. And does the great spiritual nature within us, which stands related to the spiritual order, possess nothing linking it to that order which corresponds to the senses by which we are linked to the material world? Shall we trust the touch of our fingers, the sight of our eyes, the hearing of our ears, and not trust the deepest consciousness of our higher nature—the answer of conscience, the flame of spiritual gladness, the glow of spiritual love?

To deny that spiritual experience is as real as physical experience is to slander the noblest faculties of our nature. It is to say that one half of our nature tells the truth, and the other half utters lies. The

proposition that facts in the spiritual region are less real than facts in the physical realm contradicts all philosophy.

And these subjective experiences, it is to be noted, are attested by external results. The inner experience has its reflex in the outer life. It registers itself in gentle tempers, in noble motives, in lives visibly lived under the empire of great forces.

It may be objected that this verification is private, subjective; good, no doubt, for the soul to which it comes, but without authority for any one else; whereas the verifications of science are universal. They are stamped with no personal signature, and wear and carry no marks of private ownership.

But all knowledge runs back into privacy. We 'know' in the scientific sense only what we have translated into the categories of our own mind. And the knowledge of God, sweet, and subtle, and sacred beyond all others, must have round it the shelter of a special privacy. Religion being in its final analysis a personal relation betwixt the personal soul and the personal God and Saviour, its verification must in the nature of things be personal.

To make this position clearer, let it be remembered, for a moment, what 'knowledge,' in the scientific meaning of the word, is. In the philosophical sense it is, and must be, an absolutely personal and untransferable thing. It rests on experience, it is limited to experience. We can, in the scientific sense, know nothing

of which we have not had direct and individual experience, and which we have not translated into terms of consciousness. And experience for any one is a tiny and limited area, covering only a limited range of facts. But who in practical life limits knowledge to the tests and demands of philosophy? 'We all,' says Illingworth, 'deal habitually with two kinds of knowledge, that which we verify for ourselves, and of whose truth we are personally certain, and that which we have never verified, and of which, therefore, at the very utmost, we can never be more than morally certain.'[1] But who pretends to rediscover, personally, all science; to verify all geography; to reject from the category of historical knowledge everything that did not begin with his own personal existence, and is not capable of being verified within that existence?

We practically, and in every realm, accept the collective experience of the race—or even the experience of a tiny cluster of individuals—as a sufficient equivalent for our own personal experience, and unhesitatingly describe what we thus learn as 'knowledge.' We claim to 'know' there is a place called Tibet, even if our feet have never trodden its frosty plateau. We know it as certainly, if not as scientifically, as the men who have waded in its icy streams and felt the blowing of its bitter winds. Even a scientist does not pretend to knowledge at first hand outside his own section of study. He accepts nine-tenths of what he calls his

[1] *Reason and Revelation*, p. 77.

science on hearsay. If he is a geologist, he takes his astronomy on trust. If he is an astronomer, he accepts his chemistry on authority.

And knowledge which rests on the collective experience of the race, or of one section of the race, if it does not satisfy the philosophical definition of knowledge, and gives us only 'moral certainty,' is yet sufficient for all the purposes of life. A king will reward a soldier, a jury will hang a criminal, a banker will cash a cheque, on very much less than first hand and direct knowledge. And in this large and popular, though untechnical, sense, religion stands in the category of verified certainties. It is attested by the general experience of mankind.

The other and rarer form of knowledge—knowledge whose witness lies in the secret and innermost chamber of the personal consciousness—the knowledge which is final and absolute for its subject, is possessed as to religion by myriads, and it is absurd to say that their experience is not valid for any one but themselves. It constitutes a weight of evidence which, for the rest of mankind, amounts to moral certainty. Let any one reflect on the cumulative force of evidence called into existence by all these separate and isolated verifications. It is a mass of evidence as weighty as anything known to science.

For consider the witnesses, their number, their character; how they fill the centuries, how they crowd every realm, how they constitute one great unbroken

and many-centuried tradition. Here is a vast unceasing procession of men and women, born under every sky, belonging to every race and age, of all degrees of civilization, all varieties of social rank. It is a procession of witnesses continually renewed. In character—taken as a whole, and allowing for cases of imperfect development—they form the very salt of the race. Purity, truth, honour, integrity, humanity, all reach their highest level in them. The chain of witnesses stretches from the martyrs of the first Christian century to the last forgiven sinner of to-day. The Christian tradition is a thing which countless currents from countless sources, from countless ages, have imperceptibly gone to form; 'brooks'—to quote Illingworth—'flowing into streams, streams swelling into rivers, rivers meeting in oceans, till the earth has become full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'

In her *Glimpses of Tennyson*, just published, Miss Agnes Grace Weld tells how the great poet, as he walked side by side with her on the high, wind-swept hills about his house, said:—

> God is with us now on this down as we two are walking together, just as truly as Christ was with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus; we cannot see Him, but He, the Father, and the Saviour, and the Spirit, are nearer perhaps now than then, to those that are not afraid to believe the words of the Apostles about the actual and the real presence of God and His Christ with all who yearn for it.
>
> I should be sorely afraid to live my life without God's presence, but to feel He is by my side just now as much as you are, that is the very joy of my heart.

This is an experience repeated in myriads of human souls. Will any one say that this vast company of earth's very noblest and best, stretching through all the centuries and found under all skies, represents one huge conspiracy of falsehood? Are all these witnesses dishonest or deceived? If any physical phenomena were attested by such a body of witnesses, living or dead—a chain of witnesses perpetually renewed—doubt in regard to them would be insanity.

God Himself makes this appeal to human consciousness. 'Ye are My witnesses,' He says. And the personal experience of the uncounted multitudes of Christ's followers in every age is, in each unit of the great host, a direct verification of the reality of religion. And these constantly reverberated and reduplicated verifications entitle us to claim that religion, as surely as science, stands in the category of things verified.

It may be asked why this experience is not universal; and the answer is clear. The experience is not cheap, easy, independent of moral character; won without effort, and kept without care. God can only reveal Himself under the laws of personality, and these are fixed. They require attention, sympathy, moral harmony. A person who is holy cannot reveal himself to the unholy, for his character to them is a thing unintelligible, or even hateful.

All knowledge has behind it personal conditions. All knowledge, indeed—even knowledge of secular

things—runs back to a moral root. It represents, in the last analysis, attention; and attention means desire, desire crystallized into will and sustained with effort. And personal knowledge depends absolutely on conditions of harmony betwixt the person knowing and the person known. 'Blessed,' says the Divine Word, 'are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' 'He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.' Nothing in philosophy is more profound than those words.

Verification, we repeat, must always be personal. It must lie deep in the secrets of the spiritual nature; and such a verification of religion lies within every man's reach. 'If any man will do His will,' says Christ, 'he shall know.' And the presumptions in favour of Christianity are so mighty, so sacred, are of so tender and moving a character, that this mood of 'willingness'—of eager and solemn consent to do God's will as soon as that will is known, and step by step as it is known—is a moral obligation on every man. It is sufficient to put us on trial.

There is no force of evidence on the side of unbelief that entitles any man to hold himself discharged from the duty of reverent and eager search after Christ. The mere possibility that He exists, that His gospel is true, that He has suffered for us, that He has redeemed us by His blood, and touches us with tender and nail-torn hands—all this lifts the whole question of religion out of the realm of what may be called debating-society

logic, and translates it into moral terms. It clothes the bare possibility that religion is true, or may be true, with authority for the conscience, with subduing sweetness for the heart. It becomes, even at this stage, that 'categorical imperative' of which Kant had a vision so clear.

And truth, no matter how beclouded by doubt, becomes at the touch of the loyal and assenting will translucent. The effort to obey scatters the shadows. It brings an instant verification. Obedience is the true and final solvent of doubt.

CHAPTER IV

The Logic of the Sunset

Spirits are not finely touched,
But to fine issues.

SHAKESPEARE.

Nature is visible thought.

HEINE.

IN his *Life* Darwin tells us how, after wandering in the shadowy and leafy depths of a Brazilian forest, he wrote in his diary, 'It is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder, admiration, and devotion which fill and elevate the mind.' He recalls that passage late in life, and says with a certain accent of regret, 'Now the grandest scenes would not cause any such convictions and feelings to arise in my mind.'

That decay of the higher susceptibilities in his case illustrates, of course, the law that the unused faculty dies. But Darwin himself can be quoted in proof of the fact that nature in one of her many forms of beauty —the beauty of a vast tropical forest—has power to strike in the human soul the chords of a feeling which is deeper than admiration, loftier than wonder; a mood

of 'devotion'; the sense of a Presence behind nature, and speaking through nature, to which the soul turns with an impulse of worship.

But that experience is repeated in human life constantly; it is reflected on every page of literature. The experience, it is true, does not come at will; it is not possible in every mood. The capacity for it may be slain. But whoever has watched closely the emotions aroused in his own mind by any of the higher manifestations of natural beauty must have found that in them, and through them, ran a certain deep note of religious feeling.

Almost every form of natural beauty will at some time or other produce this effect. The silent multitude of the stars at night; the glow of the sunrise and of the sunset; the vastness of a mountain crowned with the pure whiteness of snow; the fret of sea waves seen against the curving edge of the horizon; beauty of blossoming fruit-tree filled with the scents of spring and the hum of bees; beauty of sound, from the lark's keen trill high in the sky, to the undertone of the sea at night time; beauty of colour, from the deep blue of the arched sky to the purple that lies in the cup of a violet; beauty of form, from the trembling grace of the blue-bell to the stern majesty of a peak in the Himalayas;—all have power, in some of our moods at least, to touch the human spirit to fine issues.

Literature has for the intellect the functions of the spectrum analysis. It reveals imperishable elements

that lie hidden in the general human mind. And literature everywhere, in prose and poetry alike, makes visible this strange power concealed in the higher forms of natural beauty; the power to speak to the human spirit and to awaken in it emotions through which runs a sense of religion. Illingworth fills whole pages in his *Divine Immanence* with extracts from poets of every land and every tongue to show that in this way matter becomes to us the channel of religious forces. Wordsworth speaks for the whole choir of poets when in the well-known lines on Tintern Abbey he tells how, looking on a sunset, he has felt—

> A presence that disturbs me with a joy
> Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky and in the mind of man.

Cowper, in his more restrained fashion, repeats the thought in such lines as—

> Nature employed in her allotted space
> Is handmaid to the purposes of Grace.

Pope again, infinitely less spiritual than Cowper, yet has the same conception—

> Nature affords at least a glimmering light,
> The lines, tho' touched but faintly, are drawn right.

Examples may be gathered from every page of literature and from every class of mind. Burns,

trudging behind his plough in a Scottish field, sees a daisy in the track of the keen ploughshare, and from that 'wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,' somehow an influence thrills his conscience, and he sees in it a dim suggestion of some penalty, driven of inexorable law, waiting himself. William Cullen Bryant sees darkly painted on the crimson sky with wide-stretched wings, the figure of a water-fowl. He asks—

> Whither, midst falling dew,
> While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
> Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
> Thy solitary way?

Then, as he muses, faith in God's providence for himself awakens—

> There is a power, whose care
> Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
> The desert, the illimitable air—
> Lone wandering, but not lost.
>
> He who, from zone to zone,
> Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
> In the long way that I must tread alone,
> Will lead my steps aright.

But these, it may be said, are poets, with the unchartered imagination natural to poets. But the same effect, as we have seen in Darwin's case, is produced, by the same cause, in the mind of a scientist. Who does not remember how Linnaeus knelt and adored amid the blossoming gorse outside London? Who does not remember Kepler's cry as he spelt out the

wonders of the stars, 'O God, I am thinking Thy thoughts after Thee!'?

How deep a chord of religious emotion may be struck by the humblest form of vegetable life is illustrated in the familiar story of Mungo Park. Plundered, beaten, stripped by a band of savages, five hundred miles from the nearest human help, he tells how he flung himself down under the blazing African sun to die. As he lay despairing, a tiny bead of moss caught his eye. It was no bigger than the tip of his finger; and yet as he looked at the exquisite shaping of its roots, leaves, and capsule, he asked himself whether the Mind which planned and sheltered, and brought to such a perfection of beauty that tiny bead of moss could forget him. The tiny speck of vegetable life had for him the office of a prophet, it spoke to him with a prophet's lips. 'I started up,' he said, 'and, disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forward.' That impulse of faith was not in the moss, but it streamed through it into that fainting human spirit.

Wordsworth was a poet; but multitudes who have no poetic gift have shared the experience he describes, when he declares that in him 'the meanest flower that blows' could awaken thoughts 'too deep for tears.'

Now here is an effect which must have some cause corresponding to it in nature. Are these emotions accidents or illusions? That is incredible. They form

part of universal human experience; they are common to men of every temperament and every land. The atoms and ether waves that science discovers behind colour are real; the sensations which race from them along the nerves are real; the perceptions which mysteriously emerge from these nerve-waves in the consciousness, they, too, are real. And the effect on the spirit, which is the last link in this chain of effects, is surely as real as all the rest. Illingworth, indeed, says that the emotional effect is even more 'real,' in the only intelligible sense of the word, than the mechanical causes which produce it, since it more profoundly touches our personality.

But, it may be argued, these spiritual emotions aroused by natural beauty are nothing better than tricks of the imagination, and need not be taken seriously. Poets feel them, and artists. The reason knows nothing of them. But this, again, is unscientific. These emotions are the legitimate answer of our personality to the touch of some external cause. We cannot logically say that one part of our personality is to be taken seriously, and the other to be ignored; that the answer one part gives to an external appeal is veracious, but the response of the other is an illusion. The emotions are as much a part of our personality as the reason; and, in its order, the answer of the imagination is as valid as that of reason.

Nor can these impressions produced in our spiritual

nature by physical beauty be dismissed as being in themselves material. The effect lies in the spirit. The mind in us uses matter; the brain cannot think without the help of the blood that nourishes it, and the blood is made up of oxygen and nitrogen, of phosphorus and carbon. But the mind itself does not consist of chemical elements; nor have these chemical elements the sensibilities of mind.

These spiritual impressions produced on us by forms of physical beauty must be taken seriously; and they are part of a great fact, true in every field of the universe, the fact of the relation betwixt matter and spirit. According to one reading of the universe, it is, to quote a well-known scientist, 'a chain of law whose beginning and ending are unknown, and on which mind and matter are strung like beads'; but not even the authority of a great name can make that statement credible. The very sense attached to the term 'law' in it is unscientific. Natural law, in the accurate meaning of the word, is nothing more than a certain observed sequence of phenomena. And spirit and matter are not twin, unconscious beads strung upon some iron thread of law. Spirit is a free force, and matter everywhere is its servant and minister.

It is not merely that matter is interfused with mind; nor that matter, as science analyses it, and tracks it down to its starting-point, melts evermore into terms of mind; becoming, that is, nothing but a

disguise of force. To the man in the street the statement that colour is not in the sunset or the flower, but in his own brain; that time and space are categories of his own mind, will seem unintelligible or even absurd. They may be metaphysically true; but he will think they are hardly less absurd on that account. And yet matter, as our wiser science now teaches, is but the raw material that mind uses to produce all those phenomena in the consciousness we describe as form, colour, &c. Matter is everywhere the tool and servant of mind. It exists for the sake of mind. Its laws or relations, as we have seen, can only be described in terms of mind.

And the effect of physical beauty on the deeper emotions of our personality is the most significant part of the service matter renders to mind. It shows that to us, under certain conditions, and in certain moods, matter has a religious office. It becomes the vehicle of religious forces. For let the effect of a landscape, or a sunset, or the sound of the lark's voice falling out of the sky, or the deep monotone of the sea heard through the darkness—the voice of 'mighty waters rolling evermore'—be analysed. Amongst the effects are some clearly and definitely religious. Perhaps what has been called 'the sacrament of the sunset'—the colours that flame, and then grow pale and die in the western sky as the sun sinks—can best be analysed, since the spectacle is so constantly recurrent and on a scale so large.

What is the exact emotional effect produced by a sunset? The most easily recognized is, no doubt, the pathetic reminder it gives of our own mortality; the sense of transitory things. The little perishing life under the great arch of the sky, how brief it seems! How swiftly comes the end of it all! The ending day tells us, in nature's mighty yet fading hieroglyphics, of other endings. *Sunt lachrymae rerum.* This is how Wordsworth interprets the sunset—

> The clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober colouring from the eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.
> Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

But if the mood kindled by the sunset-skies be analysed, deeper elements will be found in it, some pensive, some peaceful, some strangely ennobling. There are in it sometimes forces that rebuke. Vile things in us are taught shame; petty and fermenting quarrels are hushed. Life seems set against a new and loftier background. Sometimes, as we look, a sense of kinship with other orders, and even a sense of permanency in ourselves beneath nature's changes, dimly stirs. Something of the peace of the great skies falls upon us.

And, deepest of all, there is a sense of the power and greatness of the Infinite Creator and Lord of all worlds, whose thoughts, in terms of beauty, we see.

All this goes to prove that there is in matter

a religious office. The ether waves, the atoms which constitute matter, become the vehicle of forces which are non-material. 'The sea,' says the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast-table,' 'belongs to eternity, and of that it sings.' 'The starry heaven,' says Burke, 'never fails to excite an idea of grandeur, and this cannot be owing to anything in the stars themselves.' Every one remembers Keats's famous line, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,' but we forget how he goes on to say that physical beauty itself is

> An endless fountain of immortal drink
> Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Now there is certainly no religious element in the mere structure of nature; in ether waves and atoms, in hydrogen and carbon and phosphorus. And yet it is also certain—a fact attested, as we have seen, by all literature and all human experience—that there is a religious service wrought into the very structure of the physical universe. And it follows from this that there is Something behind the veil of the material universe seeking religious ends, and appealing to us through matter for religious ends.

That mind should use matter to carry to other minds messages of which matter itself knows nothing is a fact proved by universal experience. What do the leaden types on which *Hamlet* is printed know of the meaning of the great drama? But Shakespeare's genius uses those bits of metal still to thrill

our minds with all the splendours of his creative imagination. What do the air waves of which the 'Hallelujah Chorus' is composed know of the exultation, the fervours of worship and adoration they convey to us? It is the soul of Handel behind these air waves that speaks to our souls through them. A cluster of wind-blown flags at the mast-head of the *Victory* on the great day of Trafalgar kindled the seamen of a whole fleet with a new daring. They still are a force stirring in the blood of the English-speaking race everywhere. But what did the flags know of the message they carried?

There must be mind at both ends of such a message. The mind of Nelson is still in the syllables of the historic signal, the mind of Handel in the great chorus. And there is Mind speaking to our minds through all these natural phenomena of which we have spoken—the glow of the sunset, the song of the bird, the mighty concave of the sky, the dim shapes of far-off mountains, the figure of the water-fowl outlined against the purple sky. To deny this is to say that in the signal at Trafalgar there was nothing but the woven cotton and the crude colours of the flags; that in the 'Hallelujah Chorus' there is nothing but certain vibrations of air.

'If a poet,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'witnessing the cloud-glories of a sunset, for instance, or the profusion of beauty with which snow-mountains seem to fling themselves to the heavens, in districts unpeopled and

in epochs long before human consciousness awoke upon the earth; if such a seer feels the revelation weigh upon his spirit with an almost sickening pressure, and is constrained to ascribe this wealth and prodigality of beauty to the joy of the Eternal Being in His own existence—to an anticipation, as it were, of the developments which lie before the universe in which He is at work, and which He is slowly guiding towards an unimaginable perfection,—it behoves the man of science to put his hand upon his mouth, lest, in his efforts to be true in the absence of knowledge, he find himself uttering, in his ignorance, words of lamentable folly or blasphemy.' [1]

We must, then, on scientific grounds, and as a scientific fact, accept the religious office hidden in matter. God sets on the frontiers of the morning and the night the great signal of sunrise and of sunset. Over the dust of city streets and the clamour of city crowds burn the great fires of the dying sun. It is God's signal to us set in His heavens. He makes the rolling of the earth sunward a message. 'The sky,' says Ruskin, 'is the part of nature in which God has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of touching him, than any other of His works.' And at how many points, by how many signals and voices, God in these accents speaks to us! Oliver Wendell Holmes picks up a shell on the seashore, and in his poem of 'The Chambered

[1] *Hibbert Journal.*

Nautilus,' he tells how the tiny shell became a parable and a message to him—

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings—

'Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul!
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!'

Shelley hears the lark singing at heaven's gate—

Singing hymns unbidden
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

'Of all God's gifts to the sight of man,' says Ruskin, 'colour is the holiest, most divine, and most solemn'; and he repeats that lesson a hundred times over in his pages. And these exquisite cadences of colour, that touch the spirit so finely, and to an issue so fine, do they represent merely forces in matter, or a Spirit behind matter, and which speaks through it to our spirits? 'There is religion,' says Ruskin, 'in everything around us, a calm and holy religion in the unbreathing things of nature. . . . It is a meek and blessed influence, stealing in, as it were, unawares upon the

heart; it is fresh from the hands of its author, glowing from the immediate presence of the great Spirit which pervades and quickens it; it is written on the arched sky, it looks out from every star, it is on the sailing cloud and in the invisible wind; it is among the hills and valleys of the earth, where the shrubless mountain-top pierces the thin atmosphere of eternal winter, or where the mighty forest fluctuates before the strong wind, with its dark waves of green foliage; it is spread out, like a legible language, upon the broad face of the unsleeping ocean. It is the poetry of nature! It is this which uplifts the spirit within us, until it is strong enough to overlook the shadows of our place of probation; which breaks, link after link, the chain that binds us to materiality, and which opens to our imagination a world of spiritual beauty and holiness.'

God, in a word, surrounds us with beauty, from the star-filled heavens above our heads to the flower-sprinkled grass under our feet; from the eastern skies where in glory the day is born, to the western horizon where in splendid but fading tints it dies. And this ministry of beauty has spiritual ends. And these ends are part of the original purpose of material beauty; for that cannot be in the conclusion which was not already in the premisses. And this higher office of natural beauty is missed by us only when by mere disuse we have killed the sensibilities to which it appeals.

Now if there are religious forces streaming upon us through material things, there must be some great Mind behind the veil of matter, seeking religious ends in us, and using the very molecules and vibrations of the material universe to serve those ends. The witness of God and religion, in brief, is wrought into the very structure of the physical universe, and the witness of our own involuntary response to physical beauty attests it.

BOOK III

IN PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER 1

The Logic of Proportion

'The utmost for the highest.'—The motto of Watts, the painter.

IF the essential elements of beauty are analysed it will be found that a certain law of proportion, a definite harmony of scale, runs through them and links them together. Failure at this point is the defeat of beauty. Nor is it merely art that demands proportion; in every realm known to the human mind it is a postulate of the healthy intellect. The preface must bear some true ratio to the book, the prelude to the song, the pedestal to the statue. If a sculptor were to construct a pedestal a hundred feet high, and perch on it a statue of a dozen inches, his work would cover him with ridicule. That perfection of any sort—of form, or of character—lies in a certain balance and symmetry of proportion is a law which runs through all realms.

And the law applies to life and character. The intellectual is higher than the physical; the moral than the intellectual; and any nature that touches these three realms, to be perfect, must be highest in the realm that is loftiest. He must be higher in intellectual

than in material terms, and higher in moral than even in intellectual qualities. A human body with the limbs of Hercules, the grace of Antinous, but with the brain of a flea and with a non-existent conscience, would be a jest. A perfect body linked to a perfect intellect, but without any touch of moral qualities, would be a devil.

A British private, to a critic who complained that Wellington was a very little man, replied, triumphantly, that 'he was biggest at the top'; and any nature in the degree in which it is perfect must obey this law of proportion. The motto of Watts, the great English artist, 'The utmost for the highest,' was simply the law of artistic proportion expressed in terms of conduct. So certain is this rule that it might be described as an imperative demand of the healthy reason. Give an astronomer the curve of a planet's track through space, and he will construct the full orbit. Give a mathematician the first term of a geometrical progression, and he will draw out the whole series. So in a perfect nature, if we know what is in lower terms, we can affirm, with absolute confidence, what it must be in higher things.

Now, all this applies to God; it is the law of His character and works. What He is in His lowest works tells, with a certainty as absolute as anything known to mathematical science, what He must be in higher things. The ellipse must fulfil the prophecy of the curve. The first term of the progression, unless

mathematical science itself is false, is the index of later and higher terms.

Now, God's lower works lie near us, in the realm of our senses. The material universe is the expression of what He is in material terms; and we are learning, with the help of science, to spell out the great alphabet of its wonders. When God thinks in terms of matter, He thinks in planets. The Milky Way itself is but one of His thoughts. Sir Oliver Lodge, in rebuking the purely materialistic reading of the universe, makes a daring use of the analogy suggested by the changes in the grey matter of our own brain which attend each process of thought. Perhaps, he suggests, the whole mighty rush of the countless hosts of stars is but the expression, in material terms, of thought in the divine Mind!

Certainly if we want to know in what mighty circles God's thoughts run, with space as their field, and matter as their instrument, we must take the wheeling stars for our guide. And day by day, with deeper and more adoring accents, we are learning to cry, 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty.' How David sang of God's glory, as revealed in the stars on which his eyes looked, we know; but in what new rapture of adoration would he have struck the keynote of his psalm had he been told that all the stars human eyes can see are but a handful compared with the unseen armies of the sky that lie beyond all seeing! And there are wonders in their

flaming depths, in the presence of which thought and imagination seem to droop rebuked, or even afraid. Who can cast a plummet into the stream of the Milky Way, that great river of stars, and sound its depths, and map out its currents?

Yet all these stars consist of brute, unconscious matter. They know nothing of their own splendour, of their paths through space, of their rushing speed. They are God's lowest works. Their mere scale, it is true, oppresses us. They dwarf us into the insignificance of insects. They seem to push God beyond our reach. And yet it is certain they represent only the outer fringe of God's greatness. They scarcely even begin to reveal what God Himself is. They are a rude, unconscious measure of His physical omnipotence, and that, in the scale of God's attributes, is His least and lowest glory.

Not the mass of the material universe, not its energies, not the rush of the planets, the almost measureless sweep of their orbits, is what is most wonderful. Higher than this is the intelligence that rules them, and maintains the equipoise of all the wheeling planets. The world of stars is built on mathematical terms, on principles of ordered and numerical ratio. It is not merely the revelation of God's power, made to us in terms of force and matter, nor the ordered and stupendous architecture of the heavens, which overwhelms. It is the creative mind behind that architecture, with its height and depth, its minuteness and its vastness. It

is too high for us. It outruns even our wonder. It bewilders us. We catch only broken visions of it; and then beneath the revelation thought sinks, overwhelmed.

And modern science, as we have seen, is opening ever new kingdoms of creative intelligence to our wonder. A few years ago the ultimate form of matter was supposed to be found in sixty or seventy primary elements, irreducible and inconvertible. They represented the stuff of which the physical universe was made. But science has untwisted the last fibres of matter; it has broken open these ultimate capsules. And lo, it is found that each lightest atom rehearses the order, and reproduces the glory of the whole star-crowded heavens! Within the tiny curve of each of these supposed ultimate molecules is a cluster of points of electrical energy, which correspond to the planets and asteroids in a solar system. Hidden in a drop of dew are a thousand star-systems more wonderful than anything the heavens know, because they revolve in dimensions which—not by their vastness, but by their minuteness—evade not only our senses, but almost our comprehension.

And so God, in the infinitesimal, seems more wonderful than even in the infinite. We have neither imagination nor wonder adequate for the mystery of power and wisdom thus revealed to us. 'The starry heavens,' says Mr. Balfour, in his address to the British Association, 'have from time immemorial moved the worship or the wonder of mankind. But if the dust beneath

our feet be indeed compounded of innumerable systems, whose elements are ever in the most rapid motion, yet retain through uncounted ages their equilibrium unshaken, we can hardly deny that the marvels we directly see are not more worthy of admiration than those which recent discoveries have enabled us dimly to surmise.'

But let all we have learned of God at this point be analysed. It is absolutely destitute of any moral elements. It is high—high beyond our dreams; but we are sure it is not the highest. We have revealed to us the wonders of matter and of material force, the wonders of the Contriving Mind, all on a scale which outruns our very imagination. When God thinks in terms of matter, the solar system is one of His thoughts. When He thinks in terms of physical power, all the omnipresent energies of gravitation express that thought. When He thinks in terms of contriving skill the balance and harmony of the material universe give us a measure of the range of intellect expressed.

But if the story stopped short at this point, how much would be lacking! The highest word would be unspoken, the loftiest realm unreached. We should have the pedestal without the statue, the preface without the volume, the prelude without the song. Power in its highest terms, intellect in its noblest exercise, divorced of moral qualities, might be the equipment and revelation of a devil. Does God stop short at that point? That would be to say, not that He

does not exist, but that He is a Being deformed, or malformed.

No; the wonders, the energies, the speed beyond comprehension of God's physical omnipotence; the splendours of His creative and contriving wisdom thus dimly revealed to us, are nothing more than the first terms in a geometrical series. They are only the curve which foretells the ellipse. The law of proportion, the test of all beauty, the condition of all perfection, must apply to God. He must be highest in the highest. What He does in the realm of unintelligent matter can only be the rude index of what He does in the kingdom of moral qualities.

The Hebrew psalmist saw this, and dared to say, 'As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.' The measure of the physical heavens, that is, is the index, in terms of matter, of the sweep of God's love; and yet it can never be more than an imperfect index. God must be not merely as great on the spiritual side as He is on the physical; He must be greater! His mercy must have a curve even beyond that of the measureless heavens. It must have heights beyond our dreams and depths below our sounding. It must hide wonders which outrun our utmost thoughts.

The law that God must be greatest in the highest is axiomatic, and it robs, at a breath, the scale of the material universe of its terrifying power. It is idle to deny that faith does, in some moods, find the height

of the heavens dreadful. The number and the rush of the stars, the far-running curves of space, they terrify the imagination. But the law of proportion which must apply to God turns these wide heavens, with all their mysterious chambers, into an argument, not against hope, but for it. The physical heavens which find room in their depths for the orbits of a thousand million stars are but a parable, in physical terms, of the greater firmament of God's mercy. Nay, the physical is but the first term of the series, and the series must multiply as it ascends. God, to come back to our starting-point, must be 'biggest at the top.'

When He thinks in terms of matter, as we have said, He thinks in planets. When He thinks in terms of love, does He think in inches? When, in the depths of space, He draws the orbit of a planet, how mighty is the curve! And when in the mysterious realm of His love He draws the orbit of a soul, does His hand move in narrower curves?

That is to say that God inverts, in His own personal character, all those laws of beauty which He has Himself made imperative on our reason. It is to say that He has the physical strength of a giant linked to the moral scale of a dwarf.

The material universe is only the outer court of the great temple of God; the spiritual realm is the Holy of Holies. And who shall dare to think that the outer court is more splendid than the very presence-chamber of the Creator? By a mathematical necessity,

a progressive series must run on, clothing itself with new powers as it runs. And by a moral necessity God must work in the spiritual realm on even nobler terms than those shown by His works in the kingdom of matter.

Now, the applications of this principle are innumerable, and they reinforce faith at a thousand points. Let it be realized, for example, what a miracle of beauty God hides, say, in the cup of a violet. Nature, it has been finely said, is 'not an artisan but an artist'; but 'nature' is a word which tricks the sense. God is the divine artist. He takes for His canvas a little curve of vegetable fibre; He bids the brown earth, the falling rain, the hastening light become His servants, and He makes for its brief life a spring blossom—the cup of a violet, the curve of a lily, the close-packed leaves of a rose—beautiful. How God works for perfection in even a dying flower! He takes from the untwisted light all the glories of colour to adorn it.

And all this is a parable of higher things. What must be God's ideals for the imperishable soul? Towards what ideals of beauty and of purity in it does He work; what mysterious reflections of His own perfect grace does He not seek for it?

It is incredible that He should make the unconscious earth, and the wind-driven rain, and the far-off fountains of the sun co-operate to make a perishing flower beautiful for a moment, and then be careless about the beauty of a soul. God's ideals in the material realm are of perfect grace. They must grow richer as they

rise through other realms. And looked at in this light, the purple cup of a violet is an argument for the richest spiritual hopes.

Or an illustration can be taken from another realm. A microscopic speck of radium, it is computed, is capable of sending out a stream of fiery particles for thirty thousand years. A needle dipped into a solution of radium nitrate, when viewed through a microscope, and set opposite a phosphorescent screen, will turn the screen into a target for successive jets of tiny stars, and the surface of the screen will be broken into minute crystals by the stream of particles which rush on it from the needle. A radium electroscope has been designed which is calculated to go on automatically ringing a bell for thirty thousand years.

Now, if God has hidden in the tiny curve of an almost invisible speck of radium a physical energy so tremendous, an energy whose pulses will beat through tens of thousands of years, what possibilities of sustained energy has He not hidden in the spirit of His child! Is He mightier in the atom than in the human spirit?

To one who has seen that pulse of fiery particles streaming from an invisible speck, and realizes that it will maintain its energy through whole ages, a belief in the immortality of the human soul gains a quite new credibility.

But these analogies are merely incidental. The underlying affirmation is that by the mere logic of

proportion, the logic that demands that the circle shall fulfil the promise of the curve, all the wonders of redemption—the Incarnation with its mystery, the Cross with its atoning suffering, the broken grave with its deliverance of a dying race from death, all the miracles and splendours of our salvation, in a word—are not only credible ; they are inevitable. The pledge of them is found in the overwhelming revelations of the physical universe. And each new kingdom of wonders opened to us by science gives them a new credibility. For on any simple rule of proportion, if God be so glorious in the meaner realm, what must be the splendour of His thoughts, and what the greatness of His works in the higher realm! For if we know nothing else about His glories, we are sure, at least, of this: they must grow brighter as they run higher!

CHAPTER II

The Logic of Ourselves

'If the idea of Order underlies all scientific thought, standing, as it were, at the entrance of scientific reasoning, there is another idea which stands at the end of all scientific thought. This is the idea of Unity in its most impressive form as Individuality.'—PROFESSOR MFRZ, *History of European Thought.*

'Should we possess these things and God not possess them?'—SIR OLIVER LODGE.

IF any one asks what is the central doctrine of religion, the doctrine that for many minds grows pale, and beyond all others needs to be reinforced in authority and made vivid to the understanding and the imagination, the answer must be, It is the doctrine of the personality of God. For when the sense of that great central fact becomes faint religion itself perishes. And it is exactly at this point lies the greatest peril of current religion.

We are not tempted to whisper with the fool 'There is no God.' Naked atheism belongs to the wards of a lunatic asylum. Some persons, it is true, contrive to keep on friendly terms with atheism by clothing it with all sorts of verbal and philosophical disguises;

but atheism, unqualified and unadorned, is for the sane intellect unthinkable. 'The atheistic idea,' says Lord Kelvin, 'is so nonsensical that I do not see how I can put it into words.' The healthy reason refuses to believe in a three-legged stool without a carpenter behind it to explain it. No sane man would offer to his neighbour the theory that the house in which he lived had no planning brain behind it and no skilful toiling hands that built it. And this great universe, whose architecture outruns all comprehension, with stars shining in such countless multitudes in its mighty firmament, and yet other stars, as science now teaches us, hidden in its very dust; this great physical universe, built on mathematical laws, saturated with intelligence to its very atoms—that this has behind it no infinite and contriving Mind is unthinkable.

All science proceeds on the theory that the visible universe is intelligible. It is built on laws which may be ascertained, on mathematical principles which can be read. And from what source can intelligibility proceed except from Intelligence?

But many, though they believe there is, and must be, a God, have abandoned the notion of His personality. He is infinite; and infinity seems, like measureless space, to be formless. We conceive of the Infinite as a mere abstract fringe of emptiness outside the Finite. So God is resolved, in Matthew Arnold's words, into a mere 'stream of tendency'; an impersonal 'power not ourselves' that, no doubt, makes for righteousness;

but is as incapable of personal relationships as, say, the Gulf Stream, or Niagara. And the denial of personality to God is fatal to religion. It thrusts God out of the moral realm, it makes personal relationship with Him impossible.

Love can only be thought of in personal terms; morality can only be predicated of a person. All the highest and sweetest relationships of life are personal. The fundamental distinction betwixt matter and spirit lies at this point; and to deny personality to God is to translate Him, no matter what decorous and high-sounding phrases are used, into terms of matter.

A machine cannot reason, or love, or will. Who can love gravitation; or pray to electricity; or sing hymns, say, to the law of the conservation of energy? All the great offices and forces of religion perish at a breath if there be no personal God. The heavens are empty, the soul sits orphaned in the waste kingdoms of space. Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, the one poem in English speech which may be described as atheism set to music, is true if there be no personal God—

> The world rolls round for ever like a mill,
> It grinds out death and life, and good and ill,
> It has no purpose, heart, or mind, or will.
>
> While air of space and Time's full river flow,
> The mill must blindly whirl unresting so.
> It may be wearing out, but who can know?

Man might know one thing were his sight less dim,
That it whirls, not to suit his petty whim,
That it is quite indifferent to him.

Nay, doth it use him harshly, as he saith?
It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath,
Then grinds him back into eternal death.

Now the general argument for God's personality is of great force, but cannot be dealt with here. It rests in the last analysis on the certainty that the world is the product of mind, and mind is the quality of a person. The one great presupposition of science, as we have said, is that the material universe is intelligible. This implies that it is the work of intelligence; intelligence that chooses its ends, and takes fit means to reach those ends. And intelligence is the attribute of a person.

Scientific authority for this belief is overwhelming. 'Science,' says Lord Kelvin, 'positively affirms creating and directive power, which it compels us to accept as an article of belief.'[1] 'Design,' says G. G. Stokes, 'is altogether unmeaning without a designing mind.' 'A law,' says Newman, 'is not a cause, but a fact. But when we come to the question of cause, then we have no experience of any cause but will.'[2] 'The presence of mind,' says Sir John Herschel, 'is what solves the whole problem of the material universe.' And the signature of mind is written on every atom

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1903, p. 327.
[2] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 69.

of that universe, on every pulse of life, on every movement of force.

It were as easy to believe that, say, Milton's *Paradise Lost* had been set up, in all its stately march of balanced syllables, by an anthropoid ape, or that the letters composing it had been blown together by a whirlwind, as to believe that the visible universe about us—built on mathematical laws, knitted together by a million correspondences, and crowded thick with marks of purpose—is the creation of some mindless Force.

We find an argument for God's personality hidden deep in one of the indestructible capacities of our own nature—the moral sense. Conscience has many uses. One of these is its silent, inextinguishable witness for God; and not only for God, but for God as a Person. What gives its mysterious sharpness to the rebuke of conscience? It is the fact that its rebuke testifies not only to some violation of impersonal law, some breach of mechanical order. It is found in the sense—not, perhaps, always translated into terms of consciousness, but lying hidden deep and inarticulate in the soul—that an infinite, loving Person has been wronged. It is the personal element which makes the sense of sin so deep, so sharp, so closely linked to remorse. 'We are not,' says Newman, 'affectionate towards a stone, nor do we feel shame before a horse or a dog. We have no remorse or compunction on breaking mere human law. Yet, so it is, conscience excites all these painful

emotions, confusion, foreboding, self-condemnation. The wicked flees, when no one pursueth. Then why does he flee? Whence his terror? Who is it that he sees in solitude, in darkness, in the hidden chambers of his heart? If the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the Object to which his perception is directed must be supernatural and divine.' [1]

Conscience, as Illingworth [2] argues, commands our will with an authority which we can only attribute to the touch of a conscious will. It educates our character with a precision of adjusted influence which shows it streams from a personal mind. 'The philosophers who have probed it, the saints and heroes who have obeyed and loved it, the sinners who have defied it have agreed in this. And the inevitable inference must be that it is the voice of a personal God.'

An almost amusing proof that God is personal may be found in the complete failure of all attempts to formulate, in intelligible terms, the conception of a God emptied of personality and attenuated into a mere impersonal force.

Human language somehow refuses to give this idea expression. The very terms used to express the notion of God, the Creator of the universe, divorced from intelligence and will, are fit for nothing but a museum of curiosities. Illingworth has given a memorable and

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 107.
[2] *Personality Divine and Human*, p. 111.

brilliant summary of these alternatives to the conception of a personal God, and of the methods by which the notion of Personality is evaded or whittled down into invisibility. Thus we have Hegel's Idea, the Blind Will of Schopenhauer, the Sublimated Unconscious of Hartmann, the Moral Order of Fichte, and the 'Eternal Not Ourselves' of Matthew Arnold. But all these are nothing better than disguises of personality, or functions of personality, torn from their source, and made to clear thought incredible, not to say absurd, as a result. The phrases assume personality in God even when seeming to deny it.

Darwin supplies a striking example of this in the famous passage in the *Origin of Species*, p. 146, in which he describes the structure of the eye, with its layers of tissues and complex web of nerves. In the twenty-seven lines of this passage there are, as Professor Henslow points out, no less than seventeen suppositions, a circumstance which takes it out of the category of severe science. But the thing to be noted is the part that 'Natural Selection' takes in the process by which the eye is called into existence. 'We must suppose,' says Darwin, 'that there is a Power represented by Natural Selection intently watching' each alteration in the transparent layers, and 'carefully preserving the most fit' until a better one is produced, and then destroying the old ones. In this way, for millions of years, and during each year in millions of individuals of many kinds, Natural Selection will 'pick out with

unerring skill' each improvement. But a Power, no matter how labelled, which 'watches,' 'chooses,' 'destroys,' and builds up by intelligent methods continued for millions of years, is certainly not a mindless and unconscious Force. It has that higher quality of personality, a reasoning will.

Abbott, in his *Through Nature to Christ*, has keenly analysed Matthew Arnold's phrase, 'a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness.' 'What,' he asks, 'is meant by the word "makes"? For the word necessarily calls up three, and only three, kinds of "making"; either "making" voluntarily, as a man makes; or "making" instinctively, as a beast makes; or "making" neither voluntarily nor instinctively, but unconsciously, just as an eddy, or current may be said to "make." Of these three kinds of "making," which is meant? If the first, you are anthropomorphic; if the second, you are zoomorphic; if the third, you are azoomorphic. Such a use of the words,' he adds, 'rather conceals than reveals thought, and conveys, as perhaps, indeed, it is intended to convey, no certain revelation whatever of the nature of God.'

Perhaps the least successful effort to express in reasoned language the conception of God without personality is that of Herbert Spencer, and there is no more brilliant example of destructive criticism than that applied to Herbert Spencer's views by William Arthur in his *Religion Without God*. Mr. Frederic

Harrison unkindly describes Herbert Spencer's Unknowable as the 'All Nothingness.' He pictures its inventor, Mr. Herbert Spencer, however, as saying to the theologians, 'I cannot allow *you* to speak of a First Cause, or a Creator, or an All-being, or an Absolute Existence, because you mean something intelligible and conceivable by these terms; and I tell you that they stand for ideas that are unthinkable and inconceivable. But *I* have a perfect right to use these terms, because I mean nothing by them, at least nothing that can either be thought or conceived of, and I know that I am not talking of anything intelligent or conceivable. That is the faith of an agnostic, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.'

A brother sceptic, Sir James Stephen, is still more severe. 'Mr. Herbert Spencer,' he says, 'works his words about this way and that; he counts that part for ghosts and dreams, and the residue thereof he maketh a God, and saith, "Ha, ha, I am wise, I have seen the truth."' The string of names by which Herbert Spencer tries to express the conception of an ultimate cause and of a creative power who is not personal; 'these,' says Sir James Stephen, 'are nothing but a series of metaphysics built upon one another and ending where they began.'

William Arthur, too,[1] distils excellent satire on Spencer's Unascertained Something, 'of whose existence we are more certain than any other existence,'

[1] *Religion Without God*, p. 486.

his Power without attributes, his Substratum of material existence on which only Nothingness rests; his Unconscious Agency of which conscious humanity is a product; his Unconscious Substance of which conscious humanity is formed . . . his disguises, when there is only a single thing to disguise itself and be imposed upon; his Creative Power that does not think, act, or will. 'Putting all these positives into line with all the negatives, we arrive,' says William Arthur, 'at only one perfectly clear idea—namely, that at every moment, no matter how much accumulates to obscure it, the existence of an eternal and omnipotent Creator keeps cropping up through all.'

In one striking passage, indeed, Herbert Spencer's better sense revolts from the strange conception of a God who discharges all the offices of reason without possessing reason. 'Christians,' he says, 'make the erroneous assumption that the choice is between personality and something lower than personality; whereas the choice is rather between personality and something *higher*.'[1]

Mr. Bradlaugh, in his turn, is on the most familiar terms with God. He has walked round about Him, explored Him, measured Him with the foot-rule, and is able to report that God 'cannot be intelligent,' 'cannot think,' 'cannot have the faculty of judgement,' &c. Haeckel's negatives are on an amazing scale. His monistic philosophy definitely rules out the three

[1] *First Principles*, p. 31.

great central truths of God, Freedom, and Immortality. What room is left even for the riddles of the universe, or who survives to speculate on these riddles, after God, Freedom, and Immortality are dismissed, and only a world of machines is left, the plain man fails to understand.

For it is to be noted that all those forms of philosophy which deny personality to God attenuate into nothingness the personality of man. Looking up into the heavens they find them empty; and looking round on man and nature they discover nothing but, to use William Arthur's phrase, 'a mere Vanity Fair of disguises.' And this twin denial of personality both to God and man may well drive us to suspect the logic on which both dreadful denials stand.

For when all the qualities of Personality—intelligence, will, and freedom—are denied to man, what is left? On the monistic theory men are mere bubbles on the surface of reality, and they are bubbles exhausted of moral contents. The harlot in the street is one bubble; the mother bending tenderly over her child is another. They are equally necessitated, equally incapable of praise or blame. A man's beliefs are as much necessitated as the colour of his hair, and as remote from all moral qualities. Emotions, beliefs, political theories, philosophical arguments, the foulest lusts, the purest affections, all may be resolved into chemical terms.

'All of our philosophy,' says Huxley, 'all our poetry, all our science, and all our art—Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, and Raphael—are potential in the fires of the sun.' The protoplasm of a mushroom, he declared in his lecture on 'The Physical Basis of Life,' is essentially identical with that of the man who eats it. Two particles of fungoid will develop—one into a mushroom, and the other, viâ the brain of Shakespeare, into *Hamlet;* and as far as physical contents are concerned, both are identical.

An adequate knowledge of chemistry, on this theory, would enable a philosopher to inject—say, with a hypodermic syringe—free-trade views, or a belief in protection; a triumphant confidence in the monistic theory, or the most energetic scorn of that theory, into any given number of persons. The arrangement of the particles of grey matter in Professor Haeckel's brain which compels him to believe in what he calls monism is as inevitable as, say, the combination of grey matter in Sir James Stephen's brain which compelled him to pronounce that theory not merely a form of error, but 'the most complete nonsense.' Everything is mechanical, necessitated, non-moral. It is as logical to exhort a man to change his creed as to become, say, six feet high. It is as unreasonable on this theory to blame him for being a rogue as it would be to blame him for having red hair.

This is a theory, of course, which destroys all morality. To act on it, or even to hold it consistently,

and to talk about it intelligibly many minutes in succession is impossible. It is entertaining to notice how Haeckel credits the primary atoms with the very power he denies to man. 'The atom,' he says, 'is not without a rudimentary form of sensation and of will.' The scientist who denies soul to man thus discovers soul in the molecule.

Who will not turn away with a touch of scorn from teaching so flippant, so charged with peril to morality, and so utterly in conflict with our own consciousness? To call it 'scientific' is to dishonour a great word.

But turning aside from the verbal feats of distressed philosophers, and the civil strife which wages among them, it is sufficient for our present purpose to point out that the nearest, the most intelligible, the highest proof of personality in God lies in ourselves, in the central fact, rooted deep in our own consciousness, that we are persons.

Personality is for us a fact of consciousness. It is, to quote Illingworth, 'the inevitable and necessary starting-point of all human thought, for we cannot by any conceivable means get behind it, or beyond it.'[1] If we are not sure of this, we are sure of nothing. 'If I may not assume,' says Newman, 'that I exist and in a particular way, that is with a particular mental constitution, I have nothing to speculate about, and had better leave speculation alone. Such as I am it is my all, and must be taken for

[1] *Personality Human and Divine*, p. 41.

granted, otherwise thought is but an idle amusement not worth the trouble.'

A whole science of psychology is built on this one luminous certainty, the certainty of our own self-consciousness; and psychology is as much a science, and deals as certainly with definite laws and ascertained phenomena, as astronomy, or chemistry, or geology.

But what, when the very roots of our nature are examined, do we find constitutes in us personality? Included in it are, no doubt, deep, mysterious realms which can only be guessed at; forces which evade definition. Deep below the consciousness are vast primitive tracts of being, unilluminated and uncharted. That sub-conscious region resembles a dim and unmapped continent. But when we have allowed for these mystic and strange realms which lie outside the clear disc of consciousness, certain elements of our personality are clear. The Christian reading of our nature is noble and adequate; it is the only reading which fits the facts, as science slowly, and by the debates of centuries, interprets the facts. We are spiritual beings; and the spiritual order is one which transcends matter, masters it, uses it, includes it; just as the chemical includes and transfigures the mechanical, or the vital the chemical order.

The fundamental characteristic of personality is, to use the language of psychology, self-consciousness; the quality of a subject becoming an object to itself. Herbert Spencer, it is true, denies this fundamental

mark of our personality. 'If it is the true self which thinks,' he demands, 'what other self can it be that is thought of?' William Arthur burlesques this by saying that, if it is the true self which shaves, it must be another self which shaves it. Mansel argues that if in personality subject and object are identified, this means the annihilation of both, and on the strength of this logic he dismisses self to the dim realms of the unknown and the unknowable.

And yet it is a fact of consciousness, of which every man can be the judge, that he can make himself the object of his own thought. Self-consciousness lies in that fact. And in the light of that self-consciousness we see in ourselves the great faculties of reason, of will, and of love. If these are the most mysterious things we know, yet they are the things we know most certainly. They stand in the light of direct self-consciousness.

Perhaps of all these qualities that of a free, self-determining will is most vehemently denied. Yet we are directly conscious of freedom; of the power to think and to love; of the power to choose our ends. The materialistic school, it is true, denies in stentorian accents the very possibility of a free will in man. Haeckel, in his *Riddle of the Universe* (p. 5), says, 'The freedom of the will is a pure dogma, based on delusion, and has no real existence. Every act of the will is as absolutely determined by the organization of the individual, and as dependent on the momentary condition of his environment, as every other activity.' But

Haeckel could not be consistent. After denying free will to man, he declares, as we have seen, that even the atom is not without a rudimentary form of sensation and will. Why that should be denied to man which is ascribed to the atom is hard to see. Dr. Johnson settles the question with his sturdy common sense. 'Sir,' he said to Boswell, 'we know our will is free, and there's an end on't. As to the doctrine of necessity, no man believes it.'

There is certainly no easy predisposition in man to believe in his own free will. Linked to the freedom of the will is the twin fact of responsibility, 'and,' says Illingworth, 'there is no fact in the world that in their misery men would not more gladly have denied'; for if it could be denied, human responsibility would cease, and that dark element in human experience, remorse, the sense of failure, would not exist.

But the sense of freedom is inwrought into the very fibres of our consciousness. It lies at the root of our nature. Even those who regard it as a delusion are obliged to admit that it is a delusion from which there is no escape; a delusion which we must treat as a reality. All human law proceeds on the theory that man is free, and, being free, is responsible. All history verifies it. The rational order of society is only possible on the theory that men are not automata, but responsible beings; and that a rational order of society could spring from an irrational disease of the mind is unthinkable.

Human personality, in brief, includes great and splendid capacities which we ourselves only half comprehend. One of the classic and memorable passages in Augustine's *Confessions* is that in which he wanders through 'the stately halls of memory,' and dwells on its splendours and mysteries. And memory is only one of the secondary endowments of our personality. And behind all other factors is the entity to which they belong, and from which they are inseparable. These strange and half-comprehended qualities of personality are linked into conscious unity, and fenced into a separateness of which, to quote Liebnitz, the impenetrability of matter is but a faint analogue.

Personality, with all its mystery and greatness, is thus the ultimate fact of consciousness. Man is conscious that he is a free spirit. The sequences of the material world are compelled and unconscious; but man is self-determined, an end in himself, a free spirit moving in a world of unconscious forces and compelled sequences.

This, then, is the fact about ourselves. What light does it shed on the nature of God?

It is the supreme proof that God Himself is personal. For is it credible that He has given us something nobler and loftier than He Himself possesses? It makes the dignity of our nature that we are not links in a chain, accidental eddies in some stream of unconscious existence. This quality of separate and indestructible personality makes all great

things possible to us. We can love, we can choose, we can worship. If personality is denied to man he is smitten with an instant degradation. He is thrust out of the moral order. All the sweetest relations of human life are made illusions. The love of a mother to her child is as mechanical as the blowing of the wind. All moral possibilities are extinguished. Our consciousness tricks us. If a man is only a machine the very highest activities of human life are turned to lies. Why should we preach to machines; pass laws which they are expected to obey; love them, weep over them, admonish them?

But we know we are not machines. An engineer, with his endowment of free and conscious personality, can stand beside the great engines which drive a battleship and feel he is nobler than they. He has invented them; he is able to control them. They answer to every pulse of his will with all their giant strength.

Shall we, then, say that God who has given us this high and noble endowment, and so set us in the moral order, does not Himself possess what He has given to us? To say that involves a paradox which confounds all reason. If this be so, then is God less than His own creature. He is lower in the scale of existence. He is Himself thrust out of the moral order. This is to say that the infinitesimal contains what cannot be found in the Infinite. 'There are many errors,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'but there is one truth, in anthropomorphism. Whatever worthy attribute belongs to

man, be it personality or any other, its existence in the universe is thereby admitted; we can deny it no more.'

It is Christianity which has deciphered man's nature and drawn into clear light the elements of his personality. The historic development of the science is clear, and can be traced from Augustine to Luther; from Luther to Kant; from Kant to Lotze and Martineau, to McCosh and Mansel, and many another. Christianity sets man in the august light of the Incarnation, and so the whole reading of man's nature has been revolutionized. Even the metaphysical disputes of the early Christian centuries as to the Trinity, and the relations of the Persons in the Godhead to each other, disputes which we now contemplate with intellectual impatience, and even with an undeserved touch of intellectual scorn, helped to shape the whole conception of human personality, and to create the science of psychology.

And when we have read our own nature we have learned to interpret the nature of God. The proof and the interpretation of personality in God are found in that sense of a free personality which is the deepest consciousness of our own being.

CHAPTER III

The Logic of the Infinitesimal

'The earth is a point, not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. . . . There is surely a piece of divinity in us, something that was before the elements, and pays no homage to the sun.'—Sir Thomas Browne.

GOD is the infinite, man is the infinitesimal. God is the ocean, man the drop. And what ratio is thinkable betwixt extremes parted by an interval so measureless? The ocean includes all that the drop contains, and infinitely more. Where the infinitesimal ends the Infinite begins. How can the infinitesimal measure or interpret the Infinite?

Yet in some dim, profound sense, the drop does interpret the ocean; the infinitesimal suggests and explains God, the Infinite. This must be true, if only in this sense: that whatever of rich and noble faculty there is in us God must possess, and possess on a scale outrunning not only the broken hint of our own faculties, but the utmost measures of our imagination. It is unthinkable that God is less rich in faculty than His own handiwork; that He has given us at any

point more than He Himself possesses. How can the drop include in its tiny curve something the ocean itself does not hold?

Our very senses are in this way a divine revelation to us; a witness of what there must be in God. They suggest powers and faculties which, in the mysterious scale of His infinitude, God Himself must possess. Was it a deaf God who invented the ear, or a blind God who gave us the faculty of sight? Is it thinkable that a Being, Himself mindless and unintelligent, gave us—what He does not Himself possess—the imperial faculty of reason? 'He that planted the ear, shall He not hear; He that formed the eye, shall He not see; He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?'

To say that man is the measure of God is an affront to reason; for it is to say that the atom is as great as the planet. But it is a yet vaster incredibility to say that in any one faculty God can be less than His own creature, for this is to say that the atom has something the planet lacks. The Infinite must for ever, and in all the heights and depths of capacity, be more than the infinitesimal. So we get a principle as certain as anything the human mind can know, but capable of a hundred applications, and carrying with it far-reaching issues: the principle that what is highest in us best interprets what God is, if only because He must possess more than we can find in our own nature.

If, for example, this principle of the ratio betwixt

the infinitesimal and the Infinite be applied to Christian history, it instantly makes more than credible—it makes certain, and even inevitable—what seems to many persons the central incredibility of that history: the story of the Incarnation, the descent into human flesh of the eternal Son of God. Love, we know instinctively, is the highest in the whole range of moral qualities. If the loftiest nature in the universe, in the highest mood love knows, the mood of limitless self-sacrifice, breaks into history and takes visible form, it must be exactly in such a shape as that we, on the Christian faith, hold the Incarnation to be. And the proof of this lies, not remote from us, hidden in perplexed terms of logic; it lies near to us, in the very make and capabilities of our own nature.

Human love in its ordinary manifestations is selfish and brief. But there is one form of that love—a form which, since we were all once children, has touched us—which makes the love of the Incarnation perfectly credible. Not all mothers, it is true, are motherly; but in the heart of every true mother, at the sight of her infant's face, the touch of her infant's fingers, the cry of her infant's pain, there breaks into flame the glow of a love which is deathless, and which is capable of moods and acts of self-sacrifice which carry with them strange implications.

Here is love speaking with human lips, and wearing a human guise, which is not destroyed by want of desert in the object loved; which finds, indeed, in the

very want of desert only a new argument for tenderness and sacrifice; love which often takes its most compassionate forms towards the one who least deserves it. It is for the wanderer, for the outcast, for the son who has broken loose from household ties, and is in the far country, and perhaps by the swine's trough, that the true mother weeps oftenest at God's feet. Here is a love which time cannot change, nor failing strength make faint. The mother's senses grow dim; her busy hands lose their strength, her tireless feet their swift lightness. But behind the failing senses, the dimmed eyes, the whitening hair, still burns, quenchless and immortal, the flame of her love for her child! A true mother knows that heaven itself would be for her unthinkable, if her child were left outside the gates.

There is a familiar story of such a mother—it might be told of many mothers—who lay dying. Her eyes had lost their power of seeing, her ears their faculty for hearing. The voice of the minister while he prayed at her bedside, the sound of her name from her husband's lips, sent no vibration to the brain, drowsed with the stupor of fast coming death. But while those who stood round her bed waited, in the hush of grief, for the last fluttering breath from the dying lips, suddenly from the next room there arose the voice of a weeping child. And the mother heard! It was as though her soul turned back on the dim ways of death at the call of her child's voice.

Let us suppose such a mother in heaven! Her feet

tread the streets of gold; the chant of the angels fills her ears; her eyes see the face of God; she is clad in the fine linen, clean and white, the garment of the saints. And, suddenly, she hears, in that darkness which lies outside the gates of heaven, the sound of her child's voice, lamenting; the voice of her firstborn son, of the daughter on whose cheek she grudged the wind to blow too roughly. What at such a moment, and at the sound of such a call, would be love's impulse—love even in the imperfect form in which it dwells in the human heart? It would be to leave street of gold and chant of saint, and to go with outstretched hands and hastening feet into that outer darkness, in search of her lost and lamenting child.

Who is it has planted deep in an imperfect human soul a love capable of an impulse so tender? This is God's gift. And has He nothing in His own nature which corresponds to it, and explains it; nothing which on the scale of infinity moves the Infinite Himself?

The Incarnation, the descent of the eternal Son of God into suffering human life is, in fact, but the expression, in historic terms, and on a scale in harmony with God's nature, of a love in kind like that which a good mother knows. And such love, taking such a shape, is, on the witness of our own nature, most credible. Nay, we have but to assume—what not to admit is blasphemy—that God possesses, and possesses in the measure of His being, what He has

given us, and the Incarnation is something more than credible. It is inevitable!

If it had not taken place we might have accused God of having set at the gate of life for most of us, shrined in a human heart, and making tender a human voice, a love deeper and stronger, loftier in scale, and more tender in quality, than that which keeps watch at the gates of eternity. It is to say that He has given, to some of our race at least, capacities for the self-sacrifice in which love expresses itself which outrange anything found in His own nature.

But this principle of the necessary ratio betwixt the infinitesimal and the Infinite can be applied to Christian ethics, as well as to Christian history. Changed into the terms of ethics it suggests this strange question: Does God expect a goodness in us that does not exist in Himself? Does He keep His own laws? Does He act in the circles of eternity, and on the scale of His infinite attributes, upon those moral principles which, in the tiny curve of our own brief lives, He has made imperative on us?

To doubt that is to say that God expects us to be morally better than He is Himself. God's laws of moral conduct are not caprices. They are revelations. They are the reflex of His own character, a declaration to us of the principles on which He Himself acts. This is what makes these laws, what in poetic language they are sometimes called, 'the music of the universe.' They make audible the deep, eternal harmonies which

run through all the chambers of the universe, and all the ages of eternity. But if we realize that God must, on the scale of His nature and attributes, and throughout His whole universe, act on the moral principles He has enjoined on us, instantly all the great messages of the gospel, and all the great human hopes built on that gospel, take a new and imperative credibility.

The great law of pity, for example, is by God's enactment, and by Christ's teaching, made binding on the human conscience. It is mandatory; it is eternal. To translate it into conduct is for us the supreme obligation.

It is God's law for human society. The strong is linked to the weak, the rich to the poor, the instructed to the ignorant, by a tie woven of imperishable obligation. The strong must help the weak; the rich holds his wealth under obligations of service to the poor; the instructed must make his knowledge the servant of the ignorant. This great law, as yet only half understood, is some day to solve all the social problems of the world; it is to bring in the new heaven and the new earth for which the race waits and suffers. All human gifts—strength, knowledge, money—turned into selfish possessions and kept back from the help of those who lack these things, become the guilt of the possessor. This is the law, as God teaches us, from man to man.

Does God, then, Himself act on some law less noble and lofty? Does He demand in these terms a higher morality from us than that He practises Himself?

Such a question has in it a note of blasphemy. George Macdonald uses as a motto for one of his tales a rugged verse inscribed on an old gravestone in a Scottish churchyard—

> Here, lie I, Martin Elginbrodde;
> Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God;
> As I wad do, were I Lord God,
> And ye were Martin Elginbrodde.

And in those rough rhymes lies enshrined a true if daring conception, a conception which is the very key to Christian theology.

In that great parable of pity, the story of the Good Samaritan, Christ strikes the deep, eternal keynote of human duty. He draws the figure of the pitying Samaritan, stooping over the stripped and wounded wretch lying in the dust. He says to us all: 'Go and do thou likewise.' Want cries to us; its broken accents are the eternal and peremptory voice of law. We ourselves, Christ warns us, smitten with a need so sore, are to play the part of the good Samaritan to those about us who suffer yet worse needs. Is it thinkable, then, that God reserves for Himself, sitting far above the heavens amongst ten thousand worlds, the part of the Levite, or of the priest!

Is it too daring a thing to say that this link of sacred duty which binds us in offices of help to each other must run up to the crown of the universe; that it must be imperative on God Himself? We cannot but say it. Nay! not to say it is to impeach God.

What makes this very law of duty sacred, tender, of imperishable and universal authority? It is the fact that it is the reflection of something eternal; something in God's own nature. And if this be so, what a new certainty and scale of credibility the whole gospel of divine pity and help, on which all human hope is built, instantly gains!

Forgiveness from man to man, again, is one of the most absolute forms of duty. Who refuses to forgive his brother, Christ teaches us, makes impossible God's forgiveness to himself; and here is revealed a law which runs through all time and all worlds. But in the tiny curve of this human obligation to forgive, how much is included? Peter raised this very problem in his question to Christ: 'How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?' 'I say unto you,' was Christ's answer, 'not till seven times, but till seventy times seven.' This, of course, does not mean that the human obligation of forgiveness extends to four hundred and ninety times, and ceases on the four hundred and ninety-first offence. It simply means that human love keeps no count; it knows in the great act of forgiveness no arithmetic.

Is it credible that God's love can be narrower than He requires human love to be? If this is the law which God imposes from man to man, on what law does He Himself act? Will He who expects us to forgive till seventy times seven stop short of that great height, and forgive, say, only till seven times?

That is to say that He expects from us a loftier morality than He practises Himself; that, in a word, the infinitesimal must, in moral terms, outrange the Infinite. And what inversion of reason can be more shocking!

BOOK IV

IN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

The Logic of an Hypothesis

'I will not believe that it is given to man to have thoughts higher and nobler than the real truth of things.'—Sir Oliver Lodge.

BEHIND every negative stands, uttered or silent, some positive. Who denies that two plus two equals four must be held to affirm that it equals five, or three, or some other number. Now unbelief, like every other creed, is best judged by its affirmatives. We are too much concerned with what it denies. We do not draw out in clear terms the affirmatives which stand behind these denials. Some day a book will be written on what may be called the affirmatives of unbelief, and it will be a very amazing bit of literature. For when the denials of unbelief are translated into positive terms it will be seen they require for their acceptance and digestion a much more amazing exercise of faith than the largest propositions of belief itself.

To enable this to be even faintly seen it is worth while to accept for a moment the hypothesis that

Christianity can at last be regarded as disproved. Unbelief, let us suppose, has won a final victory all along the line, and Christianity, by general consent, is dismissed absolutely from the faith of men. On this hypothesis where do we all stand?

Now, if Christ be banished out of history as a detected impostor, His mark on history remains, and has to be accounted for. Christ and the creed which bears His name are, on any theory as to their origin, the greatest facts in history. 'The simple record of three short years of Christ's active life,' says Lecky the historian, 'has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.'[1] This 'impostor' somehow has far more profoundly affected the human race than all the other great figures of history put together; and to account for the actual world about us without Him is the most perplexing task to which the human intellect was ever called upon to address itself.

The confession of John Stuart Mill is noteworthy. 'It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings described as those of Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the

[1] *History of Morality*, vol. ii. p. 88.

Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, still less the early Christian writers.'[1]

The theory that the whole Bible is a mere collection of legends, that it represents the inventions of rogues or the dreams of fools, is held with easy assurance by some simple people. But on any theory as to the truth or falsehood of the Bible, its historic force, its results in civilization, remain unaffected. It is still the most wonderful and influential form of literature the human race knows.

If we accept the hypothesis that there is no reliable history behind it, that there are Psalms but no Psalmist, laws but no law-giver, prophecies but no prophet, evangelists but no evangel, the wonder of the Bible is not lessened. It is almost infinitely increased. Fact or fraud, history or dream, the book exists. It has done a certain work in the world. It may be tried as the *Iliad* is tried, or the historical writings of Thucydides or of Tacitus—by purely literary tests. And when we have agreed that David, or Christ, or Paul never existed, that the events recorded in the Bible did not actually happen, yet some explanation must be given of the book.

How does it come to pass that the most splendid literature the race knows has blossomed, not on the stem of Greek intellect, or of Roman genius, not in the brains of scholars, or philosophers, or poets, but beneath the narrow brows of a cluster of Jewish

[1] *Essays on Nature*, p. 253.

peasants and fishermen? For that the literature of the Bible, considered simply as literature, does utterly outrange all other products of the human brain cannot be doubted. The *Iliad* and the Psalms may be taken, roughly, as contemporaneous forms of literature; but it is impossible to compare for a moment the God of whom the Hebrew Psalms sing with the lying, quarrelling, lustful deities of the *Iliad*. Pope has condensed the moral character of these deities into two terrible lines—

> Gods changeful, partial, passionate, unjust,
> Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust.

Who can imagine the 23rd Psalm set singing amid the clash of weapons which makes up the *Iliad*?

If we compare Isaiah with Plato, or, say, Juvenal with St. John, the contrast in merely literary values is nothing less than startling. They belong to different worlds. The pure, profound, and infinitely tender teachings of what, on the theory of unbelief, is a deluded Jewish peasant, such as John, compared with the literature of Imperial Rome—the Rome or the Greece of his time—are like the song of a lark carolling in the sunlit depths of the sky, compared with the foul imagination and obscene wit of a Caliban fallen drunk.

But the mere contrast in spirit and genius betwixt the Bible, as a form of literature, and all other human writings, is, perhaps, the least wonderful fact in the

case. Mark Twain summed up the disputes as to the authorship of the *Iliad* by saying the critics had proved it was not written by Homer, but 'by another person of the same name!' That, of course, is a jest. The theory of the multiform authorship of the *Iliad* was practically slain by the reflection that it is easier to believe in one Homer than in a dozen. But what shall we say of the theory which explains the *Iliad* without any Homer at all?

There are keen disputes as to whether Shakespeare wrote the plays which bear his name. But some one with Shakespeare's genius, whatever name he bore, certainly lived. The works which actually exist prove this. Suppose it were discovered beyond doubt that Shakespeare never existed; his plays are forgeries; the grave at Stratford-on-Avon is empty. Still *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* exist. It takes a Shakespeare to invent a Shakespeare. A man who, not having Shakespeare's brain, yet borrowed his name and wrote his plays, would be a more astonishing phenomenon than Shakespeare himself. And it takes a Christ to invent a Christ. To ask us to believe that some nameless and forgotten impostor invented the character and story of Jesus Christ, preached the Sermon on the Mount for Him, imagined all His parables, forged His ethics, conceived in His name the parable of the Prodigal Son and of the Good Samaritan, and yet was himself throughout the whole process a conscious and

conscienceless impostor—this is the wildest flight of mere unreason.

And the fraud of this nameless cheat, we must believe, has created the Christian religion. It has built cathedrals, inspired martyrs, made saints, sent out missionaries, reshaped civilization, created a myriad godly lives and uncounted happy deaths. What a stupendous genius such an impostor must have been!

In what period did he live? What was his name, his birth, his training, his motives, his reward? He was surely a much more astonishing being than Christ Himself! The New Testament, with no Christ and no Paul behind it, is a much more perplexing book than even on the Christian theory it claims to be, and is infinitely less credible.

It is a mere form of lunacy to declare that behind the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, the fourteenth of St. John, and the Sermon on the Mount there is the soul of a rogue, the brain of some sly and lying Greek, the temper of some narrow and pharisaical Jew. If falsehood can assume the office, wear the aspect, and talk with the accents of self-evident truth in this fashion, all the foundations of knowledge are unsettled.

Some truths are self-evident, some facts prove themselves; and no truth is surer, and no fact more absolute than the truth and the fact that behind the literature of Christianity, however we quarrel about its dates or the exact names of its writers, there is a

spiritual genius unparalleled elsewhere in human literature.

Now, it satisfies science, when called upon to explain a rose, with its vivid tints and rich perfume, to be told that there is a living root to the flower. But the theory which requires us to believe that the rose never had a root, or that it blossomed on the stem, say, of a thistle, can only be regarded as a jest. The rose itself, in the only logic science knows, proves the rose-seed. All botany is nonsense if that be not true.

We may dismiss, then, the crude scepticism which declares the Bible to be a forgery, which asks us to believe that the book which in every syllable enforces truth, is itself a lie; that the scheme of ethics which scourges roguery with whips of utmost penalty, is itself an invention of rogues. That form of infidelity, at least, is dead, killed of mere intellectual contempt. The sane human reason rejects it in advance. But there is a more plausible form of unbelief which rejects the Bible, as an illusion—an innocent illusion—with a sort of tender and admiring regret. The great book is no doubt beautiful, but, alas! it is only a tangle of human dreams, and it is as unsubstantial as a dream. It is made up of the visions of nameless and long-dead poets, the dreams of mystics and enthusiasts.

Christ is one of these dreams. The redeeming love which sought us, suffered for us, died for us, is another of these dreams. There is no such love anywhere in the universe. God as a Father, watching from the

crown of His heavens with unforgetting tenderness over His children, is but another dream, beautiful, no doubt, but, alas! air-drawn and unsubstantial. There is no fatherhood amongst the stars, or beyond them. Heaven is a dream which delights children. It soothes the imagination of the dying, and serves as a useful opiate for grief. But no golden and eternal reality corresponds to it. The notion that we have spiritual natures, and belong to a spiritual order, which death cannot touch, and which has heritage with God Himself, is yet another dream.

The compassionate fancy might wish these dreams were true, but it is idle to build life on illusions. In Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, the hag-ridden, haunted slayer of the albatross comes home at last. He sees the hills, the lights of his native town, and he trembles lest it should be only an idle vision that cheats his senses. Is it all a dream? then how bitter the waking will be!

> Is this the hill, is this the kirk,
> Is this my ain countree?
>
> . . . . .
>
> Oh, let me be awake, my God,
> Or let me sleep alway.

And any one who has drunk in the splendid imaginations of the Bible, who believes in God's love, in Christ's redemption, in immortality, in final victory over sin, in a character lifted by God's grace to a divine purity, in the eternal city of the saints, with its streets of gold and gates of pearl—if told that these are nothing

but idle dreams, might well ask never to be awakened from them!

But who wants to live in a fool's paradise? Let us know the truth at any cost. If religion is woven of illusions, if it is a kingdom of unrealities, what honest mind will not renounce it?

But when this hypothesis which turns the Bible into a book of dreams has been accepted, there remains the question: Where did these dreams come from? We have somehow, it seems, contrived to build in our imagination a better God than really exists! We have dreamed of Him doing nobler things than He actually has done, or could do. He is a God who cannot reach the scale of our imagination, who is not so big, so rich in faculty, so lofty in purpose and action as our dreams picture Him. How did He come into existence?

We have been able to dream of a love divine and eternal, which stoops from the crown of the heavens to save God's wandering children, and saves them by suffering for them. And the very dream of such a love, in its reflex effects on us is, by the test of actual facts, the noblest force that has ever touched human character. But God, alas! is smaller than our dreams. We have endowed Him, it turns out, with a loftiness and a tenderness of love of which He is, as a matter of fact, incapable. This is surely the most amazing paradox yet invented! No miracle recorded in the Bible requires so much faith for its acceptance.

Is it a dishonour to God that, being great, He

stoops to us? Does it make Him less? Having made us so that we long for Him with the strongest passion human nature knows, is it a reproach to Him that He gives Himself to us? Would it be more to His glory if He mocked us? It is this very wedlock of the wisdom that planned the heavens, the measureless power that guides the stars, with the tenderness that stoops to the whispered prayer of a child, that counts the tears of the widow, that hears the sigh of the prodigal, which makes the inconceivable greatness of God. It completes the mighty curve of His attributes. And is it credible that we can conceive this amazing greatness, and God not be capable of it?

'Like as a father pitieth his children.' So runs the ancient Psalm. And such pity *ought* to exist. It makes God Himself more divine. Pity sitting crowned beyond the stars, pity linked to infinite power and making that power its servant—if this be true, the universe shines with a new glory, and God Himself is more god-like. If we could be God, and choose what kind of God we would be, it would be *this*! Have we, then, imagined a nobler God than actually exists, and has our fancy framed a grander universe than He has been able to build?

And the New Testament reading gives scale and definiteness to the pity of the Old Testament. '*God so loved the world*,' runs the great message, 'that He gave His only begotten Son. . . .' Here, in brief, is a revelation that opens a new moral kingdom to us, a

kingdom of unimaginable tenderness and grace. And we are asked to believe that it is the mere creation of our broken fancy; that outside that kingdom the actual God sits, a Being too small to fill its horizons, too petty to sit upon its throne, unworthy so much as to cross its threshold. And can human dreams outrange God's facts in this fashion? This is not credible. The message of redemption is a light breaking in on us from great realms above us. It is a revelation which proves itself. 'The Incarnation,' says Illingworth, 'is its own evidence. It is here; and how did it come here, and why has it remained here except by being true?'

The Bible represents God as saying, 'My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor My ways as your ways. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so are My thoughts above your thoughts and My ways than your ways.' And this *ought* to be true! The realities of God ought to be nobler than the dreams of man. It would be the perplexity and the despair of reason if this were not so. But, on the theory of unbelief, it is man who is able to say to God, '*My* thoughts are higher than your thoughts'! We have pitched our conceptions too high. Our poor dreams are fairer than God's realities!

Yet, according to unbelief itself, this incredible inversion of ratio betwixt God and ourselves—an inversion which makes man's thoughts too high for the scale of God's acts or God's character—obtains in

only one realm. It is visibly false throughout all the mighty chambers of the physical universe. If we consider the scale, the transcendent forces, the measureless greatness of the visible universe, God's thoughts in that region outrun ours as the planet exceeds the atom. Our utmost science is only beginning to spell out the first letters in the great alphabet of God's material works. We are catching a broken vision of the illimitable horizon of the physical universe. The vastness of that universe, its mysterious heights and depths, the forces that beat in it, from the fires of the far-off sun to the mysterious energies throbbing in an atom of radium, all are great beyond our dreams.

But, on the theory of unbelief, when we enter the still loftier realm of the moral universe a strange thing happens. God shrinks in stature; man expands! In all the great forces of that realm, in love, in goodness, in pity, God's facts are smaller and poorer than man's dreams! In the physical realm our highest science cannot comprehend God's lowest works. What do we really know of space, of matter, of force, or of life? But in the spiritual order unbelief asks us to believe that a hundred nameless and forgotten impostors have been able to imagine more than God has ever been able to perform. They have dreamed of a loveliness to which God Himself has never attained!

Where did we get this power of imagining something greater than there is in our Creator? Was there ever such a paradox offered to the sane intellect? It

is asking us to believe that the ocean itself has a narrower curve than one of the drops buried in its depths.

Even the most obstinate of sceptics, it may be claimed with confidence, might well wish religion to be true. For the illusion is lofty. If it were true, God would be greater than He is, man happier, goodness easier, the outlook for the race infinitely nobler. And it may be asked in an astonished whisper, How does it come to pass that a lie is nobler, loftier, and more beneficent than the truth?

Christianity, it is to be observed, is the one moral theory which could be translated into universal practice without destroying the world. If Plato's republic suddenly became the pattern of universal society, slavery would re-emerge; the brothel would take its place everywhere as a decorous piece of social machinery. If the Koran miraculously and suddenly shaped the world to its pattern, a religion of cruelty would take the place of a religion of love. One-half of the human race, the feminine half, would sink in the scale of being to the level of the dogs. Woman, on its teaching, is denied a soul here and a heaven hereafter.

But suppose that by some strange chance, and in the course of a single night, the Bible stole into the imagination of the whole world! It took possession of every human life; it reshaped to its own pattern the ideals, the wills, the tempers, the politics, the literature, the appetites of mankind; and to-morrow

morning the whole planet awoke with Christianity supreme everywhere.

Whether the Bible be a reality or a falsehood, it is clear that certain things would immediately follow. There would not be a liar's tongue, a rogue's brain, a thief's palm left in the world! Henri Quatre's dream of a French millennium was 'a fowl in every peasant's pot'; but the sudden and universal supremacy of the Christian religion in the world would put peace at every man's fireside and love in every human heart. There would be no scolding wives, no faithless husbands, no wrecked homes, no broken-hearted mothers, no fallen women. Hunger and strife and hate would vanish. If every man acted on the Golden Rule, the immemorial quarrel betwixt the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' would end at a breath. All social hates would die. The want of the world would disappear. Greed and selfishness would perish. The strife betwixt nations would come to an end. Milton's dream of a time when

> No war or battle's sound
> Was heard the world around

would come true, and 'the idle spear and shield' would be 'high up-hung' for ever.

No one can doubt that if Christianity became the master force in every human life this is what would follow. But let us take the other hypothesis. Let us suppose that the conviction of the absolute untruth of the Bible suddenly became universal. It was a detected

and universally abandoned fraud. Its conception of God was known to be a dream, its ethics ceased to be binding; its conception of the eternal world, of an immortal life hanging on these few broken, hurrying moments of time, of measureless penalties for wrong-doing, and infinite rewards for righteousness—all was as idle as a child's fairy tale. Heaven was known to be a dream. God, it was finally discovered, had nothing to do with us.

Now, it is certain that such a triumph of scepticism would call into instant existence a world in which no sceptic would desire to live. Worship would perish, and all that goes with worship. Prayer would be universally abandoned; it would die on the lips of little children; it would be heard no more in the hush of great sorrows, in the worship of great congregations. The Churches, with all their beneficent offices for the young, for the sick, for the outcast, with their great service to society, their witness for righteousness, their restraining power against vice, would crumble into ruins. The last hymn would have been sung, the last missionary recalled, the last sermon preached, the last leaf of the Bible dismissed to a museum or to a dust-heap.

Under such conditions no one can doubt that human society would suffer an instant and limitless injury. Life would lose its horizon. For grief there would be no consolation, for morality no binding authority, for undeserved wrong no eternal compensations. All the disruptive forces of society would gain

a new and strange energy. Would morality itself survive, with no throne of judgement waiting for us beyond the grave, no infinite equity inexorably binding punishment to wrong-doing, and measureless rewards to right-doing?

The ethical trend of the new materialistic theory of man, as a matter of fact, is already visible. In Haeckel's latest work, *The Wonders of Life*, for example, he praises suicide. It is a form of social 'redemption.' A man, he declares, has 'an unquestionable right to put an end to his sufferings by death.'[1] Nay, we have a moral right to kill, not only ourselves, but other people. We shoot or poison a faithful dog who has grown too old for comfortable life, and why should we not, on the same principles, shoot or poison our friends when they grow bald-headed and lose their teeth? 'We have a right, if not a duty,' says Haeckel, 'under such conditions to put an end to the sufferings of our fellow men.' To dismiss the too obstinate invalid by a dose of morphia or cyanide of potassium, Haeckel assures us, 'would very often be a blessing both to the invalids and their families.' He calculates[2] that in Europe alone there are two million lunatics, many of them incurable, to say nothing of lepers, people with cancer, &c.; and these are kept in life at a huge public and private cost. How much of this pain and expense could be spared, Haeckel reflects, if people could only make up their minds to administer to

[1] *Wonders of Life*, p. 116, [2] Ibid., p. 123.

every incurable a sufficient dose of morphia. He admires the ancient Spartan habit of strangling newborn children if they were weakly, and urges its general adoption.[1]

A moral world reflecting these ideas would be a somewhat alarming place of residence. But Haeckel is quite logical. If men are mere ferments of chemical forces, with no more of free will, and of the responsibility born of free will, than, say, the effervescence of an acid and soda compound, what room is left for pity or morality? What obligations of help or forbearance does one bottle of chemicals on a shelf in a laboratory owe to the bottle beside it? And, does any one think that the morality which sanctions the strangling of sickly infants would not produce fruits in other realms of human life as alarming?

Now, let the whole creed thus offered to us be considered. At every point it is an affront to reason. It asks us to believe that life is a transitory by-product of the blind play of unconscious forces; so that which knows is born of that which is unknowing; the moral blossoms on the stem of the non-moral; pity emerges from the clash of forces that are pitiless. This wonderful universe is a mechanical process with no discoverable purpose, an eternal gyration of mechanical energies with no trace of moral order in it. But a moral order does exist, with its roots in our conscience, and its verifications in our consciousness, and therefore it is

[1] *Wonders of Life*, p. 124.

part of the system of things. Yet we are asked to believe it represents no principle in that system.

This creed is a direct menace to morals. According to its teaching, all moral qualities—courage, goodness, pity, self-sacrifice—are nothing better than labels on the jars of a chemist's shop. A mother is a mere combination of carbon, phosphorus, lime, and water, with a few salts thrown in. The whole interval betwixt greed and love, betwixt the lust that prompts to sin and the conscience that rebukes sin, can be measured in the terms of chemistry. A few grains, more or less, say, of mercury, make the whole difference betwixt the saint and the harlot. Why, then, should we admire the saint or blame the harlot?

Some rare souls, it is true, even after all this had been proved, might say, like Huxley or Clifford, 'If there be no God, let us live as if one existed. If goodness is not mandatory, if it may even be disastrous, yet for its own sake we will follow it.' But for the common mass of mankind, in the rush and competition of life, with all the clamour of appetite, the evil fires of passion and greed, in them and about them, what chance would there be of virtue surviving when separated absolutely from the authority of a divine Law-giver, and from the great motives which belong to the tenderness of Christ's redemption, the holiness of God's character, the awfulness of eternity?

The world, as a matter of fact, did once try the experiment of living without belief in God or a future

life. And what the result of that dreadful experiment was let the morality, the literature, the social corruption of the later Roman Empire tell!

Let not the logic of all this be misread. If a lie is advantageous and beautiful, in no matter what degree; if the truth is, no matter how, disastrous in its consequences—yet in God's name let us reject the lie and hold fast the truth! But how does it come to pass that a lie is infinitely more beneficent than truth itself? Is it credible that truth would kill morality, and a lie reinforce it? Yet, if we accept the hypothesis of unbelief, this is what happens. Christianity is a delusion, but it creates in human society and character the grandest realities. It is a delusion, but while it lasts it is the safety of the world. If it were universally found out, it would destroy the world.

This is a paradox too monstrous for the sane reason. It is like inviting us to believe that the sun is the secret cause of darkness, and the only way of sufficiently illuminating the world is to extinguish it!

'I will not believe,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'that it is given to man to think out a clear and consistent system higher and nobler than the real truth. Our highest thoughts are likely to be nearest to reality.'

CHAPTER II

The Logic of Human Speech

'Language alone illumes the vast, monotonously coloured chart of the universe.'—RICHTER.

'Language! By this we build pyramids, fight battles, ordain and administer laws, shape and teach religion, are knit man to man, cultivate each other and ourselves.'—JOHN STERLING.

'Language, as well as the faculty of speech, is the immediate gift of God.'—NOAH WEBSTER.

'WE are all agnostics now,' according to the newspapers, and the doctrine that any knowledge of God the Infinite, by man the finite, is philosophically impossible, is certainly welcomed by many as a sort of gospel. They label themselves 'agnostics' with an air of gladness. The word serves, at least, as an excuse for dismissing God from the realm of their affairs, and for treating Him as non-existent in His own universe.

It is not that this particular book of the Bible, or that particular message from God, is regarded as historically disproved. Multitudes have as a working creed the theory that any relations of knowledge betwixt God and man are unthinkable. It is a metaphysical incredibility that the Infinite can be translated into

terms of knowledge for the finite. And in this vague assertion, which wears a delightful look of philosophical finality, thousands discover a discharge from all obligations to give God a place in their scheme of life. They take as their motto Watson's words, though not in Watson's spirit:

> Above the cloud, beneath the sod,
> The Unknown God, the Unknown God.

The history of agnosticism is instructive. Huxley invented the word; Herbert Spencer supplied it with logic. But agnosticism does not begin with either Huxley or Spencer.

The recognition of the fact that some things lie for us beyond the possibility of complete knowledge is as old as the history of thought. The limits of the human mind are undeniable; every system of psychology recognizes them, though they may differ as to the area of things unknowable, or the conditions which forbid them to be known. 'The last step of reason,' says Pascal, 'is to know there is an infinitude of things that surpass it.' And some clever wits have been eager to use this inevitable limitation of human knowledge to rule God out of human life.

Hume, for example, was an agnostic before the title was invented; and if Locke's psychology was not the root of his scepticism, it was certainly the weapon he used for its defence. Locke taught that the mind is a mirror; it simply reflects the impressions brought to it by the senses; and ideas are only remembered

impressions. Hume turned Locke's theory to uses of which its author never dreamed. We ourselves, he contended, are nothing more than a stream of such remembered impressions; our consciousness is only a succession of images which we mistake for ourselves. We can never get beyond or behind this shadow-dance of impressions to reality, to Space and Time and God. So the supreme realities must be for ever beyond the reach of knowledge.

Kant had a profounder psychology than Locke, but it is inconsistent with itself, and that inconsistency gives point to Haeckel's sneering question, 'Which Kant do you mean?'

Kant held all knowledge to be limited to phenomena, the office of the understanding being to collate the perceptions of the senses, and that of the reason to regulate the methods of the understanding. 'All our knowledge,' says Kant, 'begins with sense, proceeds to understanding, and ends with reason.' And the reason knows only three ultimate conceptions—the Soul, the Universe, and God. Yet these three sublime and ultimate ideas are for the human soul illusions, though they are illusions from which we cannot escape. They are illusions, not because they do not represent objective facts, but because we are incapable of comprehending them. The soul is, even to itself, an illusion. The universe is an illusion. God is an illusion. The philosopher who believed in 'the categorical imperative' of the moral law, yet, by his theory of the nature of

knowledge, was compelled to treat the soul, the universe, and God as lying beyond knowledge.

Hamilton held that the mind can only know the limited and the conditioned. 'The Infinite and the Absolute,' he said, 'are only the names of counter imbecilities of the human mind.'[1] They are 'imbecilities' of the mind, because they represent the effort to comprehend what transcends the sweep of its faculties. 'We must believe,' he said, 'in the infinity of God; but, being finite, we can never grasp the Infinite.' Mansel, in the same way, taught that 'the Infinite is merely a name for the absence of those conditions under which thought is possible'; but he held that 'it is a duty enjoined by reason itself to believe in that which reason cannot grasp.'

It is true that behind that tangle of metaphysical subtleties Kant and Hamilton and Mansel alike find room for God; only He stands in the category of faith, not of knowledge. He is the Unknowable, and the Absolute.

This, of course, is a harmless form of agnosticism for the unlearned man. The refinements of metaphysics, the subtleties of much-meditating philosophers, are for him nothing more than a web of unmeaning phrases. Mill, however, accepted one half of the Kantian philosophy—that which declared God to be for ever outside the realm of human knowledge—but rejected the other half, which taught that belief in God

[1] *Discussions on Philosophy*, p. 21.

was the highest reason. His philosophy has, somehow, stained through to the average mind, and it hides God finally from human thought or human concern behind the label of the Unknowable. 'We are obliged to suppose,' Herbert Spencer concedes, that there is a First Cause. It is a postulate of the sane reason. We are driven, he goes on to say, by 'an inexorable logic,' to the conclusion that He—or It—'must be infinite and independent.' Spencer affirms, indeed, that 'the omnipresence of Something which passes comprehension' is 'that belief which the most unsparing criticism of all religions leaves unquestionable or makes even clearer.'[1] Spencer thus does not banish religion from the system of things. Religion, he says, 'expresses some eternal fact.' Religious ideas of one kind or other are almost, if not quite, 'universal'; but, according to Herbert Spencer, 'the ultimate religious truth of the highest possible certainty, is that the Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable.'[2]

'Ignorance,' according to the monkish adage, 'is the mother of devotion'; and Herbert Spencer's theory, that the religion which 'nothing can banish from the system of things' is founded upon the glorious truth—a truth of 'the highest possible certainty'—that we can never by any possibility know anything about God, is but that same much-abused aphorism disguised in philosophical language.

[1] Preface to *First Principles*, p. 45.
[2] Ibid., p. 46.

If any terms of knowledge betwixt man and God are impossible, it is difficult to see how religion expresses any 'eternal fact.' What we do not know, what must for ever remain to us unknown, will by plain sense, and by men who are in a hurry, be dismissed as a factor from human affairs; and this is what agnosticism as a working creed really means. It explains, it is to be feared, the content—not to say the gladness—with which multitudes label themselves agnostics.

It is, of course, an obvious criticism that agnosticism is a creed which refutes itself. No one can quite succeed in holding it consistently and logically. Herbert Spencer himself said we are obliged, by the very constitution of our minds, to suppose that a First Cause exists; that He—or It—is infinite, independent, and omnipresent. These, surely, are large affirmations; they represent a very wide area of knowledge. How can that be 'unknowable,' of which so much is known? How much, too, must be known about the Unknowable before we reach the certainty that no revelation to us is, or ever can be, possible?

The finite, it is true, cannot comprehend the Infinite. But agnosticism really undertakes to explore the capacities and limits of the Infinite; and on the authority of that exploration to declare that there is something the Infinite never can do. It can never reveal itself to the intelligence it has created. Agnosticism thus, on the authority of its intimate knowledge of God,

announces in stentorian tones that nothing whatever about God can ever be known!

The self-contradictions of agnosticism, however, are its most harmless feature; the deadly poison hidden in it lies elsewhere. It lies in the fact that while announcing that any knowledge of God is impossible, it undertakes to give enough information about God to make Him hateful. For agnosticism carries with it some implications which make it as a religious theory more hateful by measureless degrees than atheism itself.

Atheism says the throne of the universe is empty; we are orphans. Agnosticism says Something sits on the throne, Something infinite and omnipresent. This infinite Something is our creator, but It sits with veiled face, shrouded in darkness. He hides Himself —or Itself—from His—or Its—own offspring. What a riddle—the jest of a cruel God—would be the eye without the element of light which corresponds to it! And on the theory of agnosticism the human soul itself is exactly such a jest. There is planted in it an inextinguishable longing for God—a longing which He who gave it to the soul meant to be for ever unsatisfied.

Imagine a human father who sits before his blind child, looking on the pitiful face, the sightless eyeballs He could give vision to the sealed eyes, but he will not! Nay, imagine a father who deliberately took the power of vision from the eyes, the faculty of speech

from the lips, the sense of hearing from the ears of his child, and thus shut up his child's soul, meant for light and speech and knowledge, in darkness and silence! There never was such a human father! If he existed he would be a devil.

And agnosticism says, in effect, that God is such a monster. He planted in us these indestructible yearnings after Himself, and then for ever He dooms them to be mocked. There are things He hates, and for doing which He will punish us, but He will not tell us what these things are. There are things He loves, and which will bring to us infinite rewards; but He denies to us all knowledge of their character. 'Religion,' says Herbert Spencer, 'expresses some eternal fact,' but on the agnostic theory, behind all the worship of all races through all the ages, behind the hymns and prayers of all the saints, and the smoke of all sacrifices, there is nothing but a lie.

Now, whatever else is credible, this theory is incredible. The mere inconsistency of agnosticism destroys it. While declaring that any knowledge of God is impossible, it yet assumes to know enough about God's resources to affirm what He cannot do, and enough about God's character to know that He is hateful.

But to show that agnosticism as a philosophical theory is absurd and incredible does not help us much. Is there any proof lying close at hand, and clear to even the unphilosophical intelligence, which

makes communication betwixt God and ourselves credible ?

As an answer to that question, let the significance of that unique faculty of language, which is the special characteristic of man—the faculty which perhaps more than any other separates him from the beast—be considered. In one sense, his own personality is for each man a sealed kingdom. Each soul sits within its own limits, solitary, alone, a thing apart. The separateness, the inviolable loneliness of human personality, is one of its most striking and significant characteristics. The impenetrability of matter is its faint analogue. Souls are more separate than are planets. Each human consciousness is a sealed world, dwelling apart from any other consciousness.

But it is not inaccessible. The boundaries that part one human spirit from another can be crossed. The separate spirit of man can touch, can become intelligible to, other spirits. We take the faculty of speech as a thing of course; but Professor Max Müller calls it 'our Rubicon, on the hither side of which men alone are found.' It is the boundary between the domain of the human race and that of the brutes.

There have been idle speculations as to the evolution of speech betwixt the lower animals, born of the mere expressiveness of sounds; but the common sense of mankind rejects the theory that speech—the expression of thought—could develop itself, even in millions of years, out of inarticulate sounds which merely express

feelings of animal pain and appetite. 'All serious thinkers,' says Professor Max Müller,[1] 'agree with Bunsen that the specific difference between the human animal and all other animals consists in language.' 'Man is man,' says Humboldt, 'only through speech; but, in order to invent it, he must already be man.'

And what is the significance of speech? It is the act of the human spirit unveiling itself to a fellow spirit. Man can take a cluster of air-waves, beating in more or less intense vibrations on the stretched membrane of the ear, and make it a vehicle of all the heights of thought, the depths and tenderness of emotion, the linked processes of reason. And the wonder does not merely lie in spoken language. With the help of a few visible symbols the human mind can record itself so that it will be intelligible to other minds thousands of years afterwards. A few dim characters are found on an ancient stone upon which desert sands have blown for forty centuries, and through them the thought of some long-dead conqueror or law-giver becomes audible afresh to us.

And it is nothing less than marvellous in what multiplying degree, and by what various devices, the power of human spirits to touch, and reveal themselves to, other human spirits, is exercised. A few electric vibrations sent through thousands of miles of dead wire, hung in the sea depths, will transmit thought,

[1] Presidential address before the Anthropological section of the British Association, 1889.

purpose, intelligence to a whole nation. A few dancing gleams of light flung on to the blackness of the night-sky will convey a message to a besieged city across hostile armies.

Now, the logic of human speech is clear. Why should that which is so abundantly and variously possible to man be impossible to God? If spirit can talk to spirit—the spirit of man to the soul of man—in spite of separating walls of flesh, across wide gulfs of space and thousands of years of time, how can it be impossible for the Supreme Spirit of the universe, the Father of all spirits, to speak to His own offspring? That man is capable of receiving, that he longs to receive, such messages is certain. And can we think that God is incapable of sending such messages, or is unwilling to send them? 'Shall we possess these things,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'and God not possess them?' If man be not dumb to his fellow men, why should we think God must be dumb to us all? If we can speak to each other, is it credible that the God who endowed us with that faculty has nothing in Himself which corresponds to it?

To know the infinite God, if by such knowledge is meant to comprehend all that lies in the mysterious infinitude of His nature, must be, for a finite spirit, for ever impossible. In that large and absolute sense we do not know each other. The mother does not know the infant she holds to her breast. Our largest science, in that sense of the word, knows nothing—not the

flower in the crannied wall, nor the blowing wind that shakes its leaves, nor the light which gives it colour.

But there is knowledge which is short of perfect comprehension. No human spirit comprehends all that lies within the consciousness of any other human spirit. Yet knowledge does exist from man to man; speech exists. Mind touches mind and interprets itself to mind. And agnosticism, since in the last analysis it means the denial to God of the power which He has Himself given to His creature man, is a theory which the sane reason instinctively and absolutely rejects. No sophistry can make it credible. The mystery of speech in us makes credible the mystery of speech from God to us.

BOOK V

IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

CHAPTER I

The Logic of Answered Prayers

Speak to Him, then, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet,
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet.
TENNYSON.

NO one thinks of prayer, or of answers to prayer, as a branch of Christian evidences. And yet, deep hidden in that sweetest of all human experiences, the communion betwixt the personal soul and God, there is an unrecognized logic which constitutes one of the strongest attestations of the Christian faith reason can desire.

The force of the argument from design, as we have shown elsewhere, lies in the thrill of personal recognition betwixt mind and mind. It is the discovery of intelligent purpose controlling force in the physical order; and intelligent purpose is the attribute of mind. So the argument from design, when analysed, resolves itself into the answer of the Mind of the infinite Creator to the finite mind of the creature through the medium of material things. Kepler's cry—already

quoted—expresses it—'O God, I am thinking Thy thoughts after Thee!'

But can we recognize and decipher the mind of God only when set before us in such dim hieroglyphics as the physical universe knows? If we were a dumb race we could only speak to each other by signs and gestures. If we were a race both blind and dumb we could only communicate through actual touch of fingers. And is the spiritual world such a realm of broken faculties and clouded senses? We belong to the spiritual order; and it cannot be we are on such terms with God, who is a Spirit, and is the Father of our spirits, that He can only reveal His mind to us through the rude cipher of material things. There must be some direct and personal discovery of Himself to us which the Infinite Mind is capable of making and we are capable of receiving. And the proof of that lies—too faintly recognized, alas!—in the separate, countless, accumulated, and perpetual answers to prayer, which form the most sacred part of the experience of all devout souls.

Prayer fills so large a space in human experience, it is so vitally and essentially the very atmosphere of religion, that, unless we assume that our experience in this, the highest realm, is a mere dance of illusions, there must be some great reality in prayer; some deep philosophy behind it; some wide and perpetual use which justifies its existence. 'Prayer,' says Carlyle, 'is, and remains always, the native and deepest impulse

of the soul of man.' It is incredible that such an impulse, the purest and most characteristic our nature knows, can be nothing better than a trick; a thing as idle and empty of meaning as the rustle of leaves in a wind-shaken tree. Has the God who made us—and He is Himself, we must believe, a God of truth—set in the very centre of our lives a longing, an impulse—nay, a passion—which is only a lie? And, by some bewildering paradox, has He made that lie the root of all noblest things?

'No prayer,' says Carlyle, 'no religion, or at least only a dumb and lamed one.' And it is certain that prayer has in religion the office of oxygen in the atmosphere. It is the first condition of life. No human soul would venture to undertake a religious life, to expect the ardours, the emotions, the inspirations of religion, on the condition that prayer must be dismissed from it.

On the Christian theory prayer has behind it a profound philosophy, and the facts correspond to the philosophy. Its reason lies in the roots of our nature. We are persons, and God is a person; and however wide the interval of mere scale, the analogies of human personality best interpret to us what God is. And nothing is more certain than that self-communication is the essential impulse of personality. This is the human fact; and on the Christian belief that God has made us in His likeness, the desire of self-communication must be in Him. Personality in us is the

faint shadow of personality in God; and the Christian theory is that in us the need, in God the desire, of self-communication are fundamental.

This, it may be said, is only a guess, but the facts correspond to the guess. Prayer runs through all history, exists in all religions, is as natural as breathing. 'Blessings,' cried Sancho Panza, 'on the man who invented sleep!' And prayer is as little a human invention as is sleep. On its human side prayer is the cry for communion with God; on its divine side it is the response to that cry. It represents a relationship which finds its reason in the very make of our own nature, and in the essential attributes of God.

But it is commonly said that prayer is a purely subjective exercise, and it is questioned whether the human mind in the act of prayer actually touches the divine Mind. Are there, in a word, any such things as answers to prayer; the response of the divine love to human need; the touch in the darkness, the whisper in the silence, the answer of the heavenly Father to the cry of His children?

Every one remembers the story of how Marconi set up on the American coast the first installation for wireless telegraphy; while on a point on the coast of England stood the corresponding installation. Betwixt the two rolled the desolate waters of the Atlantic, a grey space swept with many winds. Could an electrical vibration carry a message from one mind to another

across that vast interval? And Marconi has told us how he watched and listened to the faint and vagrant rapping of the instrument. A single letter, flung from the station on the English coast across thousands of leagues of sea, was to be caught and registered on the American coast.

There came a moment when Marconi heard, or thought he heard, the triple tick which was the agreed signal! Mind and mind across so many thousand miles of space had touched. But no second signal came, or has ever come since. The interval was too wide, the instruments too crude, or the electrical waves too vagrant; and, naturally enough, the world has since grown sceptical as to that alleged first signal.

But suppose the signal had been repeated continuously; that it could be repeated to-day at will. Suppose that a thousand Marconis had set up installations along every shore washed by the sea, and the messages passed from land to land intelligibly and incessantly. In spite of sea-space and blowing winds, souls talked to souls; questions were asked and answered, messages were daily sent and received. The fact of such a conquest of the separating power of space, such a manifestation of the power of human minds to speak to each other without any material link of contact, would be scientifically established. No one would doubt it, though they could not understand it, any more than we doubt, though we cannot understand, the telephone.

And if this illustration be transferred to the spiritual world, and translated into spiritual terms, it almost exactly describes the phenomena of prayer. In true, believing prayer, as millions of godly men and women know by the witness of their consciousness, the soul of man and the very being of God touch. There is appeal and response, petition and answer, the cry of need and the swift coming of help; the upward impulse of adoration from the human side, the clearest gift of blessing from the divine side.

The facts can only be rejected on grounds which would pronounce all human testimony unreliable, and bring to wreck some of the most confident generalizations of science. The sea-cable which in 1865 was being laid betwixt America and England snapped at one stage of the process, and the broken end sank in the depths of the Atlantic. The broken cable lay there for nearly a year, but the shore end at Valentia was still connected with the recording instrument. While the cable was being laid, intelligible messages betwixt ship and shore ran incessantly. When the cable was broken these, of course, ceased; but their place was taken by a stream of meaningless and idle vibrations, born of the vagrant earth-currents that poured themselves into the broken wire and kept the far-off needle rapping. No intelligence governed them, or could be read in them; they were simply the play of mindless force.

Meanwhile, ships were patiently groping in the

dark sea depths for the cable. Suddenly along the lost and broken wire there came to Valentia a message! The restless needle spelt out a word — two words. Here was thought coming along the wire. Some one was speaking. It was only a mutilated sentence that was spelt out, the words 'Got it' — a verb without a subject. But this was sufficient. It proved that there was mind at the other end of the wire. Only two syllables whispered out of the mindless sea depths, from unseen lips or fingers, across hundreds of miles; yet nobody doubted the cable was found and was being used. When intelligence speaks to intelligence through dark depths of sunless waters, the recognition is instant! A syllable is enough.

Men tell us there is only a broken wire betwixt us and God. What we think are answers to prayer, we are assured, are nothing but vagrant echoes out of empty space; the wandering currents of our own thoughts somehow coming back to us, reverberated out of eternity. But to a sceptic who doubted whether there was a mind at the other end of the broken sea-cable the two syllables, suddenly and mysteriously reporting themselves, would have been a sufficient answer. For quick, beyond all realization, is mind to recognize mind. And exactly this is what, by the testimony of myriads of human souls in all ages and under all skies, takes place in prayer. There are real answers, clear, sure, repeated; the response of a personal Mind to our mind.

Answers to prayer! Who shall classify them, remember them, or measure them? They are made up of deliverances, comforts, pardons, illuminations; strange endowments of strength to the weak, of courage to the fearful, and of guidance to the perplexed. The lives of all good mothers are rich in them. Little children know them. Strong men live by them. They have put an atmosphere of triumph round innumerable death-beds. They have dried how many tears, and comforted how many sorrows! They form part of the daily experience of multitudes. The days come and go to their music.

What explanation is possible for phenomena like these? In that silence which lies about the feet of God, when we wait in the hush and awe of prayer, shall men tell us that no voice has spoken to us; no hand has touched us, no love has blessed us? Are all these rich and deep experiences nothing better than a trick of the senses, a lie of the spiritual faculties? If that is so, the finest qualities of human nature—its sweetest tempers, its noblest flowers, the fruit of pure lives and of happy deaths—are but a form of mental disorder. For these things are born of prayer; and if answers to prayer are mere illusions which cheat us, they are nothing but a variety of mental disease. But what 'disease' is that which creates the strength, the clean-blooded gladness, the exultant energies which health itself can only envy? What delusion is this on whose stem blossom such flowers as reality itself does not bear?

Let it be remembered who are the witnesses in this matter. They are a great multitude of every people and nation and tongue; of every century and of every clime. 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his troubles.' And in every age, under every sky, uncounted voices repeat that testimony—saints and martyrs, soldiers and statesmen, great scholars and simple-hearted women. Nay, in the whole succession of the devout, the saintly, the pure, throughout all the Christian centuries, there is not one but would affirm that prayer finds its answer. Here, then, is a great, unvarying, and multiform tradition. It represents the most overwhelming verification the human intellect can know.

Of course, it may be replied that in each instance the supposed answer to prayer is a purely subjective experience; valid, perhaps, for the person to whom it comes, but for no one else. But each witness testifies to definite phenomena in the realm of human consciousness; and each separate witness must be multiplied by all the generations that have gone by, and all the saints that live to-day.

Science, to go back to our illustration, would accept absolutely half a dozen letters coming mysteriously out of the unsunned sea depths as a proof that Some one was speaking at the other end of the wire. For the blind earth-currents do not clothe themselves in intelligible speech, any more than the vagrant winds could compose *Paradise Lost*, or the vibrations of the light

paint the Madonna of Raphael. If the spiritual experience of all the saints is to be rejected as an illusion, what of certain knowledge in any realm is left to the human intellect?

Prayer is like the sea-cable. Some one certainly is speaking, is speaking every moment to uncounted human souls, from the other end. The material universe, with which our senses deal, is only a veil; behind it is the great kingdom of the spiritual universe to which we belong, and into which in a few swift moments more we must pass. That is the kingdom of God's open presence. Prayer is the electric wire running into that kingdom. We speak to God through it; we hear His voice in answer. That He exists, that He stands in personal and living relations with us, is surely proved afresh, and throughout every moment of time, by the answered prayers of all the uncounted multitudes of praying hearts, since the drama of human history began.

CHAPTER II

The Logic of Design in the Spiritual World

'The essence of mind is design and purpose. There are some who deny that there is any design or purpose in the universe at all; but how can that be maintained when humanity itself possesses these attributes?'—Sir Oliver Lodge.

NO one denies the logical force of design in the material world. Paley's argument from the watch to the watchmaker is still final for the healthy intellect. It is a form of reason which a child can understand. The house proves the builder. Intelligence in us recognizes that intelligence has planned floor and roof, walls and windows; and this logic does not stop short with the house roof. It runs to the roof of the heavens. It is as wide as the very sweep of the universe. No one can pretend to believe that behind St. Paul's Cathedral there was not the brain of a great architect, determining every line and curve and detail of the great structure. And by the same sure proof we know that behind the mighty architecture of the star-crowded heavens there must be some contriving Mind. If we cannot trust the

logic which links design everywhere to a designing intelligence, reason itself has no authority.

What is the exact logic of design? It is the discovery of conscious and intelligent purpose, that chooses its end and works towards it by fit and intelligent contrivance. And mind in the observer recognizes mind in the worker. If there is, for example, in the physical universe a discovery of purpose, of purpose using force as its servant and instrument, this is, and must be, the revelation of an Intelligence in or behind Nature to intelligence in us. So we have the thrill of conscious mind answering the touch of mind.

Now, the presence of design in the material universe is constant and undeniable. Science itself, and scientists in every school, proclaim this. Newton declared that the existence of an intelligent Creator was a necessary inference from the study of celestial mechanics, and that the study of God was therefore an essential part of natural philosophy. 'Science,' says Lord Kelvin, 'positively affirms a creating and directing Power; she compels us to accept this as an article of belief.'[1] Sir G. G. Stokes[2] finds the phenomena of vision stained through and through with evidence of design, and he says, 'Design is altogether unmeaning without a designing mind.'

To think in terms of mathematics is the highest sign of intelligence, and, lo! the whole physical universe is built on terms of mathematics, and represents

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1903. [2] *Burnet Lectures*, p. 327.

mathematical harmonies. A crystal is but a bit of concrete geometry. The law of numbers runs through the colours in the rainbow, the intervals of music, the pistils of flowers. 'Mathematicians centuries before Christ,' says Hill,[1] 'discussed the problem of what is called extreme and mean ratio; and they invented a process for dividing the line in this ratio for use in the business of inscribing a regular pentagon in a circle. But modern science discovers that the mathematical idea of extreme and mean ratio runs through the material universe. It is expressed in the angles at which the leaves of plants diverge from the stem; it is found in the revolutions of the planets about the sun. And,' says Hill, 'how can we compare the reasonings of Euclid upon extreme and mean ratio with the arrangement of leaves about the stem, and the revolutions of planets round the sun, and not feel that these phenomena of creation express Euclid's idea as exactly as diagrams or Arabic digits could do, and that this idea was, in some form, present in the creation?'

But the fact is that the very table of the elements is the chart of a keyboard of vibrations which, like the intervals in music, have a numerical basis. The distribution of the stars themselves represent numerical harmonies. Colour and music are built on numbers, the law of gravitation works in ratios which can be expressed in terms of numbers. What is all this but to say that matter in every form is built on laws of mind?

[1] *Natural Foundations of Theology*, p. 369.

Clerk-Maxwell, in his lecture on 'Molecules,' says: 'They continue this day as they were created, perfect in number and measure and weight, and from the ineffaceable characters impressed on them we may learn that those aspirations after accuracy in measurement, truth in statement, and justice in action, which we reckon among our noblest attributes as men, are ours because they are essential constituents of the image of Him who in the beginning created, not only the heaven and the earth, but the materials of which heaven and earth consist.'[1]

'If we consider the whole universe,' says Darwin, 'the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance.' He says of the eye, that, as a living optical instrument, 'it is as superior to one of glass as the works of the Creator are to those of man.'[2] He afterwards regretted having used such a theological term as 'the Creator'; but he never varied his accent in speaking of the inimitable contrivances of the human eye; and these contrivances surely imply a Contriver.

Kant says: 'It is absurd for a man even to conceive the idea that some day a Newton will arise who can explain the origin of a single blade of grass by natural laws uncontrolled by design.' Haeckel himself, while he denies design in the inorganic world, confesses it exists in organic life. 'We do undeniably perceive,' he says, 'a purpose in the structure and in the life of an organism. The plant and animal seem to be

[1] Bradford, 1873. [2] *Origin of Species*, 5th edit., p. 226.

controlled by a definite design in the combination of their several parts, just as clearly as we see in the machines which man invents and constructs.' [1]

But the witness of individual scientists is unnecessary. The great presupposition on which science itself stands is that the visible universe is intelligible, or why should it be studied? And what is intelligible must be the work of intelligence. It can be known, or why should we strive to know it? Mind must be in a thing before mind can know it. We can read type when set up in the pages of a book and in the shape of a poem or a story. But who could read type flung by chance on the floor, or piled in clusters by an anthropoid ape?

But somehow it is assumed, and conceded, on almost every side, that design only exists in the physical realm. It is to be discovered in the eye, but not in the mind to which the eye brings its reports. It is to be found in the skeleton of a bird's wing, in the imitative and protective colours of an insect, but not in the structure of the human soul. That is dismissed as outside science. There is no answer of mind to mind in what may be called the native realm of the intelligence. The spiritual universe is silent. Or if any one declares that for him it has many voices, he is dismissed as 'unscientific,' or as being tricked by the echoes of his own voice!

And yet if there be a creative Mind behind the

[1] *Riddle of the Universe*, p. 93

things created, it must surely be most clearly visible in that part of creation which is highest and closest in structure and faculty to the Creator. The mind in us ought to discover traces of the creative Mind in its own structure, and in the laws and forces of that spiritual realm to which God Himself belongs, and in which, on the theory of religion, He has given us a place. If the watch reveals and proves the watchmaker, the soul ought to reveal and prove God. And religion as a phenomenon, if it be true and comes from God, ought to show that perfect adaptation of means to ends which is the signature of the Creator on all His works. Let us see, briefly, if this is the case.

There are certainly all the marks of design in the moral sense, that chord of our nature which responds with deep, involuntary, far-heard vibrations to the challenge of right and wrong. Kant, in a familiar quotation, declares that two things move his deepest wonder—the starry heavens and the moral sense in man. And moral sense is the point of separation betwixt man and the orders beneath him. Man's distinction lies, not merely in the faculty of speech, nor in any special range and height of intellectual power. It lies exactly at this point, the vision of right and wrong; the capacity for moral character. That faculty exists nowhere else in organized life as known to us.

A scientist so detached, and so little under the direct influence of the Christian faith, as Professor W. K. Clifford, yet says: 'The idea of an external conscious

being is unavoidably suggested, as it seems to me, by the categorical imperative of the moral sense; and, moreover, in a way quite independent, by the aspect of nature, which seems to answer our questionings with an intelligence akin to our own.'[1]

The witness of our own highest faculty, in a word, and of our own deepest consciousness, assures us of the existence of a Mind which is concerned for moral ends, and has made us for those ends. And this Mind has strung our nature with sensibilities which vibrate to the touch and challenge of moral forces. Just as the eye reveals to us the world of form and colour, or the ear makes possible for us the sense of sound, and turns the vibrations of the physical atmosphere into a channel of thought and sense, so the moral sense in us links us to that world of moral qualities and forces in which God Himself dwells.

And mind in us can read, written on the moral sense within us, the purposes of the creative Mind. We can discover the end for which He made us. There is no logic more convincing than that of the correspondence betwixt an organ and the element in which it works. The structure of the eye presupposes the existence of light—and proves it. And the structure of the conscience is as definite as that of the eye; and the evidence of its sensibilities is as convincing.

But let us take, as another illustration, the story of Jesus Christ considered as a scheme of philosophy; a

[1] *Lectures and Essays*, p. 388.

force addressed to a given end; a machinery which undertakes to produce certain results. As a physiologist studies a bird's wing in relation to the medium in which it has to work and the end it has to accomplish, or as an oculist judges the eye, as an optical instrument, in relation to light, so let the story of Christ be considered. The question of its truth or falsehood may be laid aside; let it be looked at simply as a cause intended to produce a specific effect. Has it a true philosophy? Does it show intelligent purpose, choosing a clear end, and working towards that end by the fittest means? This, surely, is a question of which our reason is a competent judge.

And it is certain that if religion is a delusion, born in the dreaming brain of some forgotten poet, or shaped by the ravings of some unknown fanatic, it still, as a matter of fact, has somehow caught the art, and learned to use the accents of the divinest wisdom.

What is the end it seeks? It is, reduced to its elements, to bring the human will into rhythm, into deep, eternal, rejoicing harmony, with the real or supposed will of God. The end, then, is noble; none loftier can be so much as imagined. What are the means used to reach this end; what forces are called into existence? There is, on any true reading of human nature, only one force which the will obeys inevitably, gladly, unweariedly. It is the master force of love!

All other motives—ambition, greed, desire of power,

hunger for knowledge or for fame—are partial and temporary; they lack the note of universality. Love, provided it can only be kindled, is the master-force of the human soul. And, as a question of fact, it is the exact force to which religion addresses itself. Somehow, the rogues or fools, the dreamers or fanatics, who, on the theory of unbelief, invented the Christian story, read the deep philosophy of the human soul aright. They undertook to rule conduct by love!

But how must love be created? It cannot be bribed, or bought, or compelled. Glory of heaven or terror of hell is vain to awaken love. It has its own unalterable conditions and laws.

Love, for one thing, can only be awakened by a person. We cannot love in the deep, personal, supreme sense a theology, a book, a code of laws, a system of philosophy, or any abstraction, no matter how beautiful. Love must be personal. And what is perfectly true, and yet most strange, is that mere loveliness in a person does not always and necessarily awaken love in the beholder. It may affect us only as a statue does, or a painting. If it is remote it is ineffective. It is love that creates love. At love's touch and breath and whisper, love awakens!

And yet not every form of love will create love. Love itself may, indeed, as human experience sometimes sadly proves, be only an irritant. But granted the love of some one stronger, nobler, better, greater

than ourselves, some one on whom we are dependent, and suppose that love utters itself in love's highest mood, the mood of self-sacrifice, it speaks to us in accents of suffering, and of suffering endured for us. Then we have, tried by the highest philosophy human nature knows, the force best fitted to awaken love.

And exactly this is what Christianity brings to us. It is love redeemed from weakness by being the love of the infinite Lord and Maker of the universe. It has conscience as its servant and advocate, since it is love for the wrongdoer by the One who has been wronged. And it is love which utters itself in suffering. Its symbol is the cross and the sepulchre.

If a committee of philosophers—not to say archangels—were appointed to devise a plan which should attain what is admitted to be the essential end of religion, what more fitting means could be imagined? And on the theory that religion is not true, an incredible thing follows. Here is a group of dreamers, or fools, or impostors, who lived nobody knows where, and died nobody knows when, who yet somehow read the secrets of the human soul more profoundly than all the philosophers have ever done! And they invented a scheme which, whether fact or fiction, does fit into the human soul as the key fits into the lock!

If there be design—an intelligent purpose which seeks a great end; which works towards it by the fittest means and with the mightiest known forces—

recognizable by the human intelligence anywhere, it is here. It actually does what all the logic of all the philosophers, or the legal codes of all the statesmen known to history could not do. It changes human nature! It has not only built cathedrals, inspired a great literature, changed the course of history, and reshaped civilization. It creates saints! It has done this throughout whole centuries, and does it still under every sky, and with men of every race and of every stage of civilization. If the men and women who have surrendered themselves to the forces of religion, and are the witnesses of its power, were collected together, they would be recognized as constituting the very flower of the human race.

Shall we find design—the answer of mind to mind—in the tissues of the eye, in the membranes of the ear, in the skeleton of a bird's wing, in the nerve system of a frog, in the spinnaret of a spider? and shall we not find it in the great and magnificent structure of religion? Not to admit the evidence of some great contriving Mind there is the last disloyalty to reason. It is to accept the curve and refuse to complete the circle. It is to say that the law which is true in one realm is false in another, and this is to unwrite all science.

God's signature, in those characters we recognize everywhere else, is assuredly written deep and ineffaceably on the very fabric of religion. Its sign is found in its profound correspondence with our own moral sense,

in its fitness to achieve the ends for which it exists. To say that these supply no proof of the divine origin of religion is to accept the major and minor premisses of a syllogism, but to reject the conclusion. It is an absurd example, in a word, of arrested logic.

BOOK VI

IN COMMON LIFE

CHAPTER I

The Logic of Unproved Negatives

'The natural world, then, and natural government of it, being such an incomprehensible scheme, so incomprehensible that a man must, really in the literal sense, know nothing at all who is not sensible of his ignorance in it—this immediately suggests and strongly shows the credibility, that the moral world and government of it may be so too.'—BUTLER'S *Analogy*.

'Ignorance and doubt afford scope for probation in all senses as really as intuitive conviction or certainty.'—Ibid.

IN the secular realm—in the logic of everyday life, of the shop, of the street and the exchange—we all recognize the profound difference in practical force betwixt positive and negative evidence. In the scales of life they are not of equivalent weight. They affect action in totally diverse ways. For Robinson Crusoe on his desert island, a positive fact of the tiniest size—a single naked footprint in the sand—was enough to fill him with alarm. It needed only that solitary print, a patch of disturbed sand, to show that some one had passed along what he thought was the empty shore. But to prove the opposite, that the whole island hid no hostile figure, quite another sort and scale of evidence was necessary. To be sure that he was alone the

castaway must know every foot of the island, every hiding-place, cave and valley, hill slope and creeping stream, and depths of shadowy wood. A universal negative, as every logician knows, can be built on nothing less than universal knowledge.

Bishop Butler, through his great book—more praised, alas! than read to-day—argues that probability is the law of life. Perfect knowledge is impossible to us. We must, in any realm, act on incomplete evidence. Tried by the test of absolute metaphysical proof, we are not certain that the world of form and colour and sound—the world the hand touches, the feet press, the eyes see—really exists. Wise men have doubted its existence. They have written volumes to prove it has no existence. But in daily life we learn to act on evidence short of metaphysical certainty; and we recognize that the force of incomplete proof varies by measureless degree according to the side on which it stands. Incomplete disproof is no release from the obligation to act. It is consistent, indeed, with direct, complete, and urgent necessity for action. Probabilities, to go back to Butler's words, are of quite unequal value, both in logic and morals. We admit this is true; we act on it where money is concerned, or health, or safety.

There is a certain vague risk, a probability of low order difficult to measure, that a man's house may take fire and be burnt. There are still greater probabilities that no such calamity will happen, for not one house

in a thousand actually takes fire. But the negative probability in the scales of a wise man's brain does not count. It does not cancel the obligation to act, and so he insures his house. The miner does not know that gold lies in the reef deep below the surface. There is only a certain convergence of probabilities which points in that direction. But on the strength of those probabilities he fights his way with steel and dynamite down through two thousand feet of rock and clay. He expends toil and time and wealth on evidence far short of certainty; evidence, indeed, only reaching a moderate degree of probability, and discredited already, in a hundred cases, by failure.

But in no realm of life do we wait for mathematical certainty, and postpone action till it arrives. A shop run, a ship sailed, a campaign fought, a science pursued on that principle would be a jest. In life, we repeat, duty and logic do not walk with equal steps. Duty may be created by merely shadowy probabilities. It leaps into existence long before a perfect syllogism is reached.

Religion, it is sometimes complained, is a kingdom of half-truths; of truths only half known, and often less than half proved. We have not for its doctrines the evidence we have for, say, mathematical propositions. That is perfectly true. But the law of the practical authority of incomplete proof runs into the great realm of religion. There, as nowhere else, in regard to its obligations and duties, only that impossible,

unattainable, unthinkable thing—a limitless negative—is a discharge to the conscience. Short of that universal and final disproof the conscience may be pledged, and duty be peremptory. Incomplete proof is consistent with the highest measure of obligation; but nothing less than universal disproof—a disproof that leaves not one poor peeping doubt in existence—is a release from duty.

And let it be noticed that through all the moods of infidelity a final and universal disproof of religion is never claimed. There are multitudes who ask for some more absolute, direct, and overwhelming evidence of God's existence than anything yet offered to them; though there are thousands who know God exists by a surer test than that by which they know the sun shines or the earth stands. For the existence of external things they have only the witness of their physical senses; for facts of the spiritual order they have the direct testimony of their spiritual consciousness. But what proof—far-stretching, measureless, and final—is there in existence sufficient to sustain the tremendous and universal negative, 'There is no God'? What height and depth, what eternity and universality of knowledge, must be assumed as a warrant for such an assertion! Who is entitled to announce such a negative?

The mere sense of humour makes, or ought to make, such a performance impossible. Here is a little creature who was born yesterday and will die to-morrow. He

comes he knows not whence; he is hastening he knows not whither. He is hedged round with mysteries, imprisoned in ignorance. He knows only one little patch on the surface of only one little planet. He knows, and that only dimly, a few of the mysterious laws touching him and shaping his life. He cannot tell how his own nails grow, or why his hands obey the impulse of his thoughts, or whether, when to-morrow's sun rises, he will be in existence. He cannot say of his own knowledge whether there is not a man in the moon. And shall he undertake to proclaim to the astonished race that there is no infinite God in the immeasurable universe!

John Foster's writings, it is to be feared, are forgotten; but one overwhelming passage survives in which he proves that the tremendous negation on which militant atheism stands is necessarily and confessedly beyond proof.

The wonder turns on the great process, by which a man could grow to the immense intelligence that can know there is no God. What ages and what lights are requisite for this attainment? This intelligence involves the very attributes of Divinity, while a God is denied. For unless this man is omnipresent, unless he is at this moment in every place in the Universe, he cannot know but there may be in some place manifestations of a Deity by which even *he* would be overpowered. If he does not absolutely know every agent in the Universe, the one that he does not know may be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in the Universe, and does not know what is so, that which is so may be God. If he is not in absolute possession of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, the one which he wants may be that there is a God. If he cannot with certainty assign the cause of all that he perceives to exist, that cause may be

a God. If he does not know everything that has been done in the immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by a God. Thus, unless he knows all things, that is, precludes another Deity by being one himself, he cannot know that the Being whose existence he rejects, does not exist.

To say that there is no God, in brief, is to assert that all the chambers of the universe are empty, all the kingdoms of space are silent; that in no world amongst all the unnumbered hosts of the stars is to be seen any print of God's foot, any touch of His hand. How shall we reach the height of that great certainty? To be able to say 'there is no God, we must,' says Chalmers, 'walk the whole expanse of infinity, and ascertain, by observation, that trace of Him is to be found nowhere; that through every known and untrodden vastness in His illimitable universe there is no sign of His presence.' Who shall undertake to speak for all the unknown hosts of beings in other worlds, in other ages, and assert that no one has ever heard the whisper of God's voice, or found such signs of His power as make doubt impossible?

No one, in a word, can assure us that God does not exist. And the mere unproved probability—the very possibility—that He is, that He sits on the throne, that we live under His laws, that we must give account to Him of our actions, creates a degree of obligation which is in itself a religion. It puts us on probation. It is sufficient to morally test our characters, and, in testing our character, to fix our destiny. On any sane reading of facts the possibility that God may exist is a fact

which has a right to colour our lives, even while the argument for that existence is yet incomplete. While doubt is possible, and certainty yet unattained, there is still, to quote Chalmers, 'a path of irreligion and a path of piety'; a moral temper which befits the probability of God's existence, and a moral temper which is an offence against it.

To disregard the will of God when we have found He exists is wickedness; but to be careless of the knowledge of God, to whom, if He does exist, we are bound by measureless ties of gratitude, that, too, is impiety. We need not open the Bible to learn our obligations to God. The facts of the world about us—a world adjusted to our happiness, that gives light to the eyes, and soft air to the lungs, and beauty to every sense; a world adjusted with exquisite care, with complex and infinite correspondences to our existence—are sufficient. To think of all these myriad adaptations, these touches and signals of care, these gifts that come in silence and go unacknowledged, and yet to care not whether, anywhere in the space above us, or in the unseen realms about us, there exists a Being who has planned it all, and maintains it; this is wickedness. No one doubts that to resist God after He is known is impiety; but to be satisfied that He should remain unknown is a baseness that aggravates impiety itself.

To the reason and to the conscience alike, in short, there is no escape from the obligations of religion except by the unattained and unattainable device of a

universal negative. In this realm, duty, vast in scale and peremptory in authority, finds standing-ground on an unproved negative.

No one to-day, or no one who need be taken seriously, will, as we have said, make himself responsible for the confident and tremendous negative, 'There is no God.' But let us take a sister denial of almost equal size, the assertion that historical Christianity—with its story of redeeming love, with the great duties, and the measureless hopes born of that story—is not true. It is a scheme disproved. Christ may at last be dismissed from history and from human respect as a myth, a dream, or an impostor. The literature of Christianity is a forgery. Its ethics have no authority. Its history is a mere procession of delusions. The great hopes of which it whispers are idle dreams.

Now, many ingenious artists are busy at work trying to exhaust Christianity of all solid contents, and to whittle down its evidence to the vanishing-point. But what range and energy of evidence is sufficient to absolutely disprove Christianity? The human intellect certainly knows of no such evidence. No one even pretends to know it or to produce it. The whole civilized world about us is the creation of Christianity; its disappearance would leave the civilized order in which we live without explanation. The most courageous performance of modern unbelief is the assertion that Christianity is not proven; that it is definitely and finally disproved no one seriously ventures to say.

And betwixt the two propositions: 'Christianity is not, with mathematical certainty, proved to be true'; and 'Christianity is finally, and with absolute logic, proved to be untrue'—there is an interval almost measureless!

If Christianity is indeed proved to be untrue, we may dismiss it from our thoughts. But if that vast negative is not yet reached, and reached with the certainty of one of the propositions of Euclid—if, in brief, there is only evidence enough to make Christianity probably true, that bare probability creates a religion —with the peremptory duties and the inevitable penalties of religion.

The logic that finally disproved Christianity must, of course, in the very act of doing it, prove some astonishing, not to say incredible, things. If, for example, Christianity is demonstrably untrue, then all the saints are wrong, and all the rogues are right. The truth is on the side, not of John, who laid his head on the bosom of Jesus, but of Judas, who betrayed Him; of the soldiers, who mocked Him; of Pilate, who scourged and crucified Him. Paul, who preached Jesus Christ and died for Him, was mistaken. Julian, the apostate, who warred against 'the Galilean,' was right! If Christianity is, indeed, proved to be a lie, then the Bible—the flower of all our literature, the most wonderful book the eyes of man has ever read, the textbook of the only morals we know, the root and source of all civilization—must be either the dreams of fools

or the forgery of rogues. How did fools come to dream loftier wisdom than wise men can reach even in their waking moments? By what art did rogues invent the greatest force for righteousness history has ever seen?

For Christianity is not a book, a creed, a history, a theology, a system of ethics. It is a force reaching through all history, and shaping the world, a force without which the living world about us is left without an explanation. The denial of its truth does not merely leave the greatest event in history without a cause; it leaves it—which is a much greater affront to science—with a cause which is in conflict with its character!

The system which enjoins truth is itself a lie; the religion which demands righteousness was itself born of a fraud. Behind the sweetest, purest, noblest things human nature knows; behind the hymns of worshipping multitudes and the prayers of little children; behind all saintly lives and all happy death-beds, there is nothing but a vast and age-long imposture.

A flower without a root would be an offence to science. But a flower which in every characteristic and detail is in quarrel with its own root would be an even more grievous scandal to both reason and science. And if Christianity is untrue it is exactly such a flower. It is in open quarrel with its origin. It was born in falsehood, yet it enacts truth. It had its cradle in some rogue's brain, but

in every syllable it is an energy that makes for righteousness.

Where is the tremendous logic that proves a paradox so confounding to the human intellect? It does not exist. No one, we repeat, affects to produce it. Infidelity, so long at least as it pretends to talk in terms of reason, does nothing more than deny the force of this or that particular evidence for religion. It nowhere makes itself responsible for its universal, absolute, and triumphant disproof. On the lowest reading of the evidence for Christianity it is, at least, possibly true.

For multitudes, indeed, of the sanest, noblest men and women the world has ever known, or knows to-day, the truth of Christianity is certain. It is verified in every fibre of character, in every chamber of experience, and throughout every waking moment. But let the happy experience of these rejoicing multitudes be laid aside. Let us be content with saying that when the argument for Christianity has been reduced to its lowest value, enough survives to justify the assertion that Christianity is possibly true. And that bare possibility challenges the conscience! Nay, it binds the conscience!

If such a figure as Jesus Christ has come into human life; if such a relationship with God as that to which Christianity calls us is possible; if it is even faintly credible that its history is true; that the eternal Son of God has taken our flesh and so made

Himself our kinsman; that He has carried our sins and so become our Redeemer; that such a destiny beckons us, and such great heights of character are possible to us—the mere possibility that these things may be is a resistless moral appeal. It instantly creates great duties.

We have not seen with mortal eyes the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven; but if it is even possible that such a kingdom of God is being built up about us, and we may become its citizens, ought the thought to leave us unstirred? If these things are dreams, they are dreams we ought to wish were true. But undeniably they are more than dreams. For multitudes, it must be repeated, they are certainties. Nothing the senses know, not solid earth under our feet, nor radiant sunlight over our heads, is more certain. But for even those who label themselves sceptics these things are possibilities. And that is enough to bind the conscience.

To dismiss Christ from the realm of serious concern; to treat His story and His claims as not even worth earnest curiosity before the great Disproval is finally reached; this, surely, on any standard of ethics, is an offence almost past forgiveness.

It is all a question of common sense; a question of acting in the most sacred realm of life, in the region where the highest obligations prevail, on the principles on which we act in our daily business. We must run no unnecessary risks. We must conduct our lives on

the principle that truths not yet fully proved are sufficient to shape conduct; are enough to make search in the direction in which they point a peremptory duty. And honest search will bring the soul under the shining sky of that great promise, verified in the spiritual consciousness of thousands: 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.'

Ruskin, in a letter to his father, tells the story of his religion: 'I resolved that I would believe in Christ and take Him for my Master in whatever I did; that assuredly to disbelieve the Bible was quite as difficult as to believe it; that there were mysteries either way; and that the best mystery was that which gave me Christ for a Master. And when I had done this . . . I felt a peace and spirit in me I had never known before, at least to the same extent; and everything has seemed to go right with me ever since, all discouragement and difficulties vanishing, even in the smallest things.'

CHAPTER II

The Logic of Half-knowledge

'Knowledge is the knowing that we cannot know.'—EMERSON.

'To the riddles which Nature propounds to us, the confession of ignorance must constantly be our only reasonable answer.'—LORD SALISBURY.

'The recognition of human ignorance is not only the one highest but the one true knowledge. . . . There are two sorts of ignorance: we philosophize to escape ignorance, and the consummation of our philosophy is ignorance. We start from the one, we repose in the other.'—SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON.

FOR many people the circumstance that doubt in regard to religion can exist is a vindication of its right to exist. If God, they argue, undertakes to give a revelation to His children on such high themes as duty and destiny, it is reasonable to expect that it will be adequate. Doubt in regard to it ought to be impossible; it defeats its own end by failing to be beyond doubt.

Who doubts the propositions of Euclid, or the processes of the multiplication table? And why should not the truths of religion—which are to shape character, and from which, on the Christian theory, eternity itself will take its complexion—be as certain as the

propositions of mathematics? The laws of conduct ought to stand in a light as unshadowed and intense as the generalizations of science. Nobody doubts the law of gravitation, and if there are divine laws for character, these ought to be of a certainty as absolute. The mariner's compass has for a great ship the office of a mechanical conscience. Why should not the conscience within us, the faculty by which the soul is to be guided across the mysterious seas of conduct, be at least as obvious and undeniable as the quivering needle in the compass-case?

If there be an eternal world, on whose dim borders we stand, and into whose awful realms we must in a few moments pass, why are its gates shut so close? Why do even those who come back from its mystery bring with them sealed lips? 'Where wert thou, brother, those three days?' Tennyson pictures Mary asking Lazarus; but Lazarus told nothing! Why, in brief, are we granted, in the highest realm of all, less of knowledge than we possess in lower realms?

The answer, of course, is that in none of the worlds we touch, and into which our actions enter, do we wait for full knowledge, or is full knowledge possible to us. We move, to borrow Wordsworth's phrase, 'in worlds not realized.' We see only in fragments. We work with the unknown, or with the half known, as our tool.

This is true of daily life, of science, of our very faculties, from the senses of our bodies to the highest

forces of the intellect. We find certainty—the certainty born of full-orbed knowledge—nowhere, and uncertainties everywhere. We must live and act in all realms on nothing better than probabilities. Daily life is full of examples of knowledge fading into mystery; of action based on the half seen or on the half comprehended. If at each step we waited for a knowledge exhausted of mystery—knowledge clear-cut as a crystal, and as translucent—we should die of mere inertia.

At the present instant ten thousand ships are tossing on the sea, their sole guide across its grey wastes being that mystery we call the compass. All navigation is built on the fact that a tiny, quivering rod of steel, under certain conditions, will point north. We do not in the least know why it does this. To the test of the senses the needle in the compass-box is exactly like any other bit of steel. But it is touched by forces that come we know not whence, and work we know not how. It has invisible relations with the earth, the stars, and with strange currents of energy thrilling through all space. That little shaken bit of steel is the symbol of a mystery which baffles our science. The forces which tremble in it are hidden perhaps in the secret places of the earth, perhaps in the far-off heights of the stars—we cannot tell.

The needle, as a matter of fact, does not always point north. The chart of the variations of the compass is the signature, in some strange cipher we cannot

read, of forces which move to the impulse of energies beyond our guessing. Yet, in faith on the quivering rod of steel, and the hidden forces which make it, in spite of a thousand variations, point to one quarter of the heavens, men risk every day uncounted wealth and uncounted lives.

The world of science, too, though the fact is commonly forgotten, is a realm where knowledge in the absolute sense lies beyond our reach. It is a kingdom of half-knowledge. What we know is a tiny circle of light, itself broken by many shadows, and shut round by a wide curve of encompassing darkness, born of things we do not know. The 'laws' of science are merely convenient shorthand records of the observed sequences of phenomena. The area of observation is narrow, the forces hidden behind the sequence are unguessed.

The largest and surest generalization of science is that known as the uniformity of natural order. If there is any proposition which can claim to be universally true, a certainty beyond doubt, it is this. But this truth of science, like every other, rests on experience; and how can limited human experience prove universal truth? 'The uniformity of nature,' says Huxley, 'in a mathematical sense, cannot be proved.' It is an assumption, a working hypothesis, 'the great working hypothesis of science,' but still only a hypothesis, justified, no doubt, by a thousand fruitful results, but essentially incapable of proof.

Yet the august fabric of science rests on that hypothesis!

The law of gravitation is another of the 'certainties' of physical science. It is a force that can be tested at any point in space known to us, and at any moment of time. But gravitation is only the name of a fact whose cause lies beyond our knowledge. It explains all the movements of the planets, but itself lies beyond explanation. 'The law of gravitation,' says Professor Huxley, 'is a statement of the manner in which experience shows that bodies which are free to move do, in fact, move towards one another.' But it is only the record of an observed phenomenon; the reason of that phenomenon is an unpierced mystery. Herschel has described gravitation as 'the exerted will of God,' and what better explanation can science offer?

What is ether? All the phenomena of light are born of it. The latest guess of science is that it must be the ultimate form of matter, the very stuff of which the physical universe is constituted. And yet ether lies beyond the grasp of our intelligence. It is, to use Lord Salisbury's phrase, 'a half-discovered entity.' It evades our tests; it mocks our senses. But science has to accept that half-known fact as the explanation of a thousand diverse phenomena.

Science, at the present moment, is preoccupied with electricity, and in a hundred forms this force is being yoked to the everyday service of mankind. But, when the greatest living authority, Sir Oliver Lodge,

undertakes to describe electricity, he can only speak in negatives. It is not a form of energy, it cannot be manufactured; it may, he vaguely guesses, be a formal aspect of matter. Nay, matter itself is composed of electricity, and of nothing else. But if it is asked what is positive electricity, 'the answer,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'is still "we do not know." For myself, I do not even guess, beyond supposing it to be a manifestation, or a differentiating portion, of the continuous and all-pervading ether.' [1] But ether itself, as we have seen, is a mystery, and this is only explaining one mystery by a mystery still greater.

Our own natures are mysteries to us. The faculties we have in familiar use run back into the unknown. What, for example, is memory? We must trust that faculty; on its trustworthiness all history and all science hang. Human business and society would perish without it. Yet what is memory? In what cipher does something, we know not what, record we know not when or how, and report at what bidding we cannot guess, the events and scenes and words of the past?

Do we really know the external world exists, the world of colour and sound and form? Surely we may claim that what the fingers touch, what the eyes see, what the ear reports, lies within the realm of absolute knowledge. And yet, if we analyse our supposed knowledge of the external world, we find it shades

[1] *Harper's Magazine.*

off into mystery. It rests on nothing better than our belief in the veracity of certain reports brought to us by our senses, we know not how, and translated into terms of consciousness by methods we cannot understand. The mysterious vibrations of the unknown ether race along the nerves, they make some changes in the grey matter of the brain. The nerves that bring these vibrations know nothing of them, the brain which receives them knows nothing. But to the consciousness behind the brain comes the sense of form or of colour. The colour varies according to the greater or less intensity of the vibrations. But what is the link betwixt the vibrations of the nerves, and the consciousness of form and colour in the soul?

To that question there is no answer. It all runs back into darkness. Tyndall says the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. A definite thought and a definite molecular action of the brain appear together, but we do not know why. 'The chasm betwixt physical processes and the facts of consciousness remains intellectually impassable.' Huxley says: 'I really know nothing whatever, and never hope to know, anything of the steps by which the passage of molecular movement to states of consciousness is effected.'

No one, indeed, talks more humbly of the range and certainty of science than does a true and wise scientist. Newton, after all his shining discoveries,

draws that touching picture of himself as a little child gathering shells on the border of some great sea, unsounded and unknown; and the picture would be accepted to-day by every wise mind in science.

'What does man know of the reality of things?' asks a distinguished living scientist in the *Saturday Review*;[1] and he answers the question himself: 'Man is conscious of his own mind and of certain shadow shapes projected thereon; but outside these limits he cannot travel.' If there is anything which science thinks it knows it is matter. This is its special field; it lies open to its tests, it can be analysed to its innermost structure. And yet what does science know of even the structure of matter? 'For convenience,' says the authority already quoted, 'matter is regarded as atomic in structure, yet it is inconceivable that the atoms are indivisible, just as it is equally inconceivable that they are continuous and divisible for ever. Both theories are untenable. It is as illogical to hold one as the other. We have simply reached one of the limits of the mind where no decision is possible.' The atomic constitution of matter, science has to confess, is only a working hypothesis, and every thinker knows its inadequacy, and that it is a mere term for something transcending our experience.

The atom, in a word, was supposed to be the ultimate form of matter, the resting-place for the mind, which marked the utmost limit to which

[1] December 31, 1904.

analysis could be pushed. But the boundary has given way. The molecule consists of atoms; the atom holds in its mysterious and unthinkably minute curve a planetary system of electrons, and the electron is a strain in the ether. What the ether is science cannot even guess; still less whence comes the 'strain.' 'Matter,' says Dr. Saleeby in the *Academy*, 'is no more than a transient expression of a transient electrical relation.' Here is a catalogue of mysteries and of unintelligibilities!

Can anything seem more absolutely certain than the indications yielded by the spectroscope? They prove the presence, say, in the photosphere of the sun, of certain elements—iron, sodium, &c. And yet nothing but invisible vibrations reach the spectroscope. That the actual metals are there is only an inference drawn from a certain cluster of coincidences.

Dubois-Reymond finds no less than seven unsolved problems in the physical universe, enigmas which are the puzzle and the despair of science. These are (1) the nature of matter and force, (2) the origin of motion, (3) the origin of life, (4) the designed order of nature, (5) the origin of sensation and consciousness, (6) the origin of speech and thought, (7) free will—a sufficiently spacious catalogue of things not known!

It is easy to multiply confessions of the ignorance of science by great scientists. Is the physical life that beats in our very blood exhausted of mystery?

Does no shadow of the unknown lie about its roots? When Herbert Spencer wrote his *Principles of Psychology*, he was confident that life could be explained. 'The chasm,' he wrote, 'between the organic and the inorganic is being filled up.' Haeckel, he said, had detected a type of protogenes distinguishable from a fragment of albumen only by its finely granulated character. The difference betwixt the living and the non-living, Spencer exulted to think, was simply a question of more or less fine granulation. But in the last years of his life[1] Herbert Spencer wrote: 'In my revised *Principles of Biology* I have contended that the theory of a vital principle fails, and that a physico-chemical theory of life also fails; the corollary being that in its ultimate nature life is incomprehensible.'

Life is 'incomprehensible'—the life of the blood, the nerves, the brain! This is the last word of science. But we do not doubt life exists. And why should we complain that the subtler life of the invisible spirit is also incomprehensible?

The human understanding, according to Kant, is an island, and by its very nature is enclosed within unchangeable boundaries. It is the country of truth, but surrounded by a wild and stormy ocean, the special abode of phantoms, where many a bank of mist and much ice, soon to melt away, hold out the lying promise of new regions; and while it perpetually deceives the

[1] *Nature*, October 20, 1898.

roaming seafarer with the faint hope of discoveries, continually entangles him in adventures from which he can never get loose, and which he can never bring to any result.[1]

If any one objects to receive Kant as an authority, let him listen to Haeckel, in his latest work, *The Wonders of Life*. Science, he admits (p. 56), like religion, cannot do without faith; but 'scientific faith fills the gaps in our knowledge of natural law with temporary hypotheses'—a very poor compost; while 'religious faith contradicts natural law'—a statement which assumes the whole matter in dispute. But, according to Haeckel, science has as many gaps as a picket fence, and it is the office of faith to fill them up.

Hoffmann puts the same truth in more sober terms: 'Faith, considered as a mental act, is exercised in the formation of every science. . . . Gravitation, motion, force, atom, ether, and the like are veritable products of faith, and in no sense matters of absolute knowledge.'

Now, we can see some, at least, of the reasons which explain these conditions of imperfect knowledge under which, in every realm our life touches, we are compelled to act. We are finite, and perfect knowledge is possible only to the Infinite. We live under a law of development, and half-knowledge is a condition of progress. Moreover, we cannot know, in the fullest

[1] Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, p. 62.

sense, anything without knowing everything. Tennyson has a vision of this in his lines: 'Flower in the crannied wall,' &c.

The flower of which Tennyson sings was wind-blown, a vegetable accident, a seed caught in the crannied wall, and owing nothing to the gardener's care or skill. And yet nothing less than the whole physical universe is involved in the explanation of that seemingly accidental flower. It is the index and symbol of a thousand mysteries; the mystery of the seed itself, with its strange energy of life that baffles all science; the mystery of the wind that blows the seed. To give that wind another direction, or greater or less force, would mean new conditions of heat and cold running back to the creation of the world. Then comes the mystery of the rain, and of the forces which produce the rain; the mystery of colour, colour mixed in the far-off fountains of the sun, borne on the vibrations of ether across 93,000,000 miles of space, and absorbed or refracted by mysterious susceptibilities in the tissue of the flower, which are the puzzle of science.

Reflecting on this, with the brooding imagination of a poet, Tennyson says—

> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

This is exact science as well as true poetry. No one can completely and profoundly know what the

flower is without knowing what the whole physical universe is, nay, what God Himself is. For all the processes of that universe, and all the methods of God, have co-operated to make the flower possible.

Knowledge, then, for man, on any subject, can only be a tiny and limited disc with an engirdling circle of darkness; and the wider the area of light the vaster the sweep of the encompassing shadow. 'We cannot give,' says Butler, 'the whole account of any one thing whatever, of all its causes, ends, and necessary adjuncts, without which it could not have been. . . . The natural world, then, and natural government of it, being such an incomprehensible scheme, so incomprehensible that a man must really, in the literal sense, know nothing at all who is not sensible of his ignorance in it—this immediately suggests and strongly shows the credibility, that the moral world and government of it may be so too.'

In the daily business of life—to sum up—in our relations to the world of sense, in the most familiar tasks and processes of our existence, we must deal with the unknown or with the half known. And we do not quarrel with these conditions. We do not regard the narrow horizon of our knowledge, with its encompassing curve of mystery, as an argument for idleness. Science builds its stately fabric on a foundation of incomplete knowledge. It works in every realm with an hypothesis as its tool. Men conduct their daily

business, and risk their property and their lives every hour, on half-knowledge.

Now, religion is the highest realm in which we move. It touches God; it links us to the spiritual order; it outruns time, and breathes the airs of eternity. It is concerned with moral, not with physical, relations. Its forces are more subtle than the viewless ether. They thrill with stranger energies than electricity knows. And shall we complain that in this loftiest realm of all, open on every side to wider realms than space knows, stretching to vaster distances than Time can touch, and beating with the pulses of loftier energies than those which hold the stars in their courses, we do not possess a light on which rests no shadow? Shall we ask that here we shall have less of mystery than in the little and familiar realm of physical life and forces?

We find half-knowledge inevitable everywhere else. By what title do we demand the white light of an absolute knowledge in this realm? We cannot understand the process by which the world of form and colour reports itself to our consciousness; but we do not doubt its existence on that account. Shall we complain because we cannot understand the process by which our spirits are reached and touched by the Father of our spirits? If in the realm in which our bodies move we rejected everything outside the area of absolute knowledge, we should bring life to an abrupt stop. Shall it be a complaint—an argument

for unbelief or for inaction—that in the mysterious kingdom of spiritual facts and forces we are not given a light which certainly does not burn in the physical heavens?

A sea in which we could wade, and never get beyond our depth, would be one in which no great ship would float. And why should we complain that the great spiritual ocean flowing about us has depths beyond our sounding?

We do not quarrel, we repeat, with the necessary limitations of our knowledge in other realms. They leave us room enough for all the processes and interests, all the achievements and joys of life. Nay, these very limitations are part of the necessary discipline of our existence. We can climb to perfect truth only through a procession of half-truths. And why should we not accept with cheerful submission that law of incomplete knowledge under which we live in the spiritual realm?

Let us exaggerate neither the 'certainties' of science nor the uncertainties of religion. When we have wisely assessed both, it remains clear that the two realms are set in the same key. They are linked together by profound correspondences which show that they are the work of the same Mind.

CHAPTER III

The Logic of the Unlearned

We live by Faith; but Faith is not the slave
Of text and legend: Reason's voice and God's,
Nature's and Duty's, never are at odds.

WHITTIER.

Think not the Faith by which the just shall live
Is a dead creed, a map correct of Heaven,
Far less a feeling fond and fugitive,
A thoughtless gift, withdrawn as soon as given.
It is an Affirmation, and an Act
Which bids eternal truth be present fact.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

IN secular things we are accustomed to act on a rough, swift, imperfect logic that is not scientific or systematic or even very conscious of itself; but which, in spite of that, is sufficient for daily conduct. We act, to use a term of formal logic, not on syllogisms, but on enthymemes, an enthymeme being a mutilated syllogism; a syllogism with one of its premisses omitted, or taken for granted. We accept, that is, imperfect proofs, or proofs imperfectly stated. We take a great deal for granted.

Suppose a man in England wishes to go to New

York, an undertaking that, for a certain number of days, involves the committal of his life to forces he does not in the least understand. How does he proceed to make sure that the ship in which he is about to embark offers all reasonable conditions of safety? Being a sane man, he does not set out by rediscovering for himself the whole theory of shipbuilding. He accepts that as being already in existence. He does not go all over the ship from stem to stern with a little hammer, and tap every bolt and rivet in her to satisfy himself that the vessel is sound. He does not put the captain through an examination to judge of his knowledge of ships. He does not make any independent scrutiny of the charts. He does not take the nautical tables under his arm and hasten to the nearest observatory to have them tested; still less does he undertake to verify them himself by abstruse mathematical calculations. If he did all this before he set out for New York he would die without getting there.

If he thinks about the matter at all, he says in effect to himself: 'This ship belongs to a good line; it has crossed the Atlantic safely a score of times; the captain would not be in command of her except he were competent; many of my own friends have sailed in her. This is enough for me.' And he embarks with the most cheerful confidence. He takes, in fact, a whole world of things for granted. As he steps on board the ship and sails out into the mysterious and

trackless sea, the act represents a venture of faith rather than a demonstration of knowledge. But he has evidence enough for common sense.

This is the rough, hasty logic of practical life; and for the average man this represents—and must represent—his logic in religion. Life is too short, death too near, duty too urgent, the rush of affairs too swift, to make it possible for him to wait till he has built up a creed, fact by fact, article by article, and by a process of tedious and elaborate reasoning. He borrows, as he must necessarily borrow, the homespun logic of practical life, and carries it to the realm of duty and faith. Behind the things he takes for granted there is, of course, a weight of unconscious and inarticulate logic not easily realized, still less for the man whom it influences, put into speech. But it is enough for him to take the broad, general, unanalysed but undeniable facts of the case.

He has never seen New York. How does he know there is such a city? He will tell you that everybody acts on the assumption that it exists. Great ships sail to and from it. Through every hour of the day and night cablegrams bring news of it. The newspapers cannot be explained except on the theory that it exists. It is incredible that all the geographies could lie; that there is, in fact, with regard to New York a vast objectless conspiracy of lies stretching through generations, and in which the entire human race takes part. That such a confederation of lying should exist, so ancient,

so vast, so motiveless, so successful, is the most absurd of incredibilities.

A resident in one of the outer provinces of the empire has never seen the King; he perhaps has never talked with anybody who has seen him. How does he know that Edward VII is a real person? If asked for proof of his faith the man would smile. The laws run in the King's name; the courts sit by his authority; the coins with which we buy and sell bear his image. That he should not exist involves such stupendous and concerted lying on the part of such a multitude of people that the possibility may be dismissed as a jest.

And all this represents the unconscious and justifiable logic of the average man about Christianity. Christianity is interwoven with the whole fabric of human life. The moral laws which have authority over every man's conscience run in Christ's name. You cannot explain civilization, or the daily newspaper, or the very almanac, and leave Christ out. There is no need, indeed, to appeal to such impersonal abstractions as 'civilization' and 'literature' for proof of religion. The streets of every city are full of Christ's witnesses—men and women who know Him, love Him, serve Him, and would die for Him. All the best forces the man in the street knows, from the earliest sound of his mother's voice to the face of his little child lying in its grave, somehow stream from Christ, and lead back to Christ.

This logic, we repeat, is not scientific, it is not

borrowed from books, it has not even a nodding acquaintance with metaphysics. It is rough, swift, imperfect; and yet it is enough for conscience; enough for conduct; enough for everyday life.

But when analysed, the effective working logic behind the unlearned man's religious faith will be found to have certain definite and sufficiently reasonable elements. First, there is what may be called the artist's logic of beauty. And beauty for the human soul has a logic of its own. There is something in the very make of our nature which, in the presence of anything visibly noble and gracious, yields instant and silent tribute. It is one of the primary instincts of our being, an impulse independent of logic, and stronger than logic.

Now, here is the scheme of life, of belief, of duty, that we call the Christian religion. The question of its origin or of its evidences may be for the moment put aside. Let it be judged as a landscape, or a flower, or a great painting is judged, simply by the element of beauty in it; by the grace, the scale, the dignity that awaken the admiration of the artist. And it is certain that, by the test of the single quality of beauty, its mysterious harmony, its shining aspect of grace, the Christian scheme challenges the acceptance of every faculty in us. If this great inter-knitted scheme of belief and duty and hope is the product and birth of a fraud, then somehow there exists a miracle stranger than anything told in the Gospels—the miracle

of a lie which wears a fairer countenance, and is clothed with a more perfect grace, than any truth the human mind knows!

And this quality in the Christian scheme, as it appeals to the unlearned man, may be judged at a thousand points. Take, for example, the Christian account of the origin of man. The man in the street, who has no time to be scientific, and who translates what of science he does know into a very unscientific vernacular, does not completely understand the evolution theory, and what of it he does understand, as far as it applies to himself, he dislikes. That theory, as he reads it, teaches that we began, a sufficient number of ages ago, as a mere chemical ferment, or as a bubble in the spawn and slime of the sea. Our ancestors were little floating atoms in the salt spume of the dark primaeval waters. Next they became ascidians, little bags of unorganized jelly; then they attained to the dignity of, say, the oyster; and in process of ages, creeping out from betwixt its shells, they reached the loftier height of the tadpole. In due course they shed their tails, and mounted to the dignity of frogs. Then followed a great leap, or even a succession of leaps. Our ancestors became monkeys, and, in some mysterious manner, got their tails back again. Once more they got rid of them, say by the process of sitting on them for a certain number of centuries; and so at last, and by some such process, infinitely varied, manhood was reached.

This, of course, is little better than a translation

of the evolution theory into terms of humour; it is absurdly unjust to what may be called the Theistic version of that theory. 'It is possible to have a reading of evolution that satisfies the imagination; a reading which conceives of God as putting empires, philosophies, civilizations, literatures, into some far-off primary germ, and guiding their evolution from it. Evolution *plus* God, and as a mode by which God has worked, may, or may not, be scientifically proved; but no one can contend that the theory is ignoble.' But the description we have here given represents the average man's conception of it. And if we take Haeckel's reading of evolution—which brings man up from the slime of the sea, or from a chemical ferment, by a chain of purely animal ascent, with no touch of a divine Hand, or of conscious purpose, at any link—the man-in-the-street version of it is not so very unjust. Man, according to Haeckel, is 'an affair of chance; the froth and fume at the wave-top of a sterile ocean of matter.'[1] Is it strange that such an account of his origin disquiets him? It affronts his self-respect, it shocks his common sense.

But the Bible takes him by the hand and leads him back to the dawn of the worlds; it lifts the great veils of space and of time, and in the wondering hush of heaven bids him hear God say, 'Let us make man in Our image and in Our likeness.' The average man does not stop to nicely consider how much of this is

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, vol. iii., No. 2, Jan. 1905. p. 293.

parable and how much historic fact; but he contrasts the two theories. The evolution theory in its anti-theistic form is only an hypothesis, a scientific word for a more or less reasoned guess. And if the Christian account of man, as read in the simplicity of the opening chapters of the Bible, is only a parable, or even a guess, which of the two has more of the accent of greatness? If the Bible story is a delusion, it is a splendid delusion! And without weighing evidence, without determining, as indeed he cannot determine, how much of the evolution theory is proved, and how much guessed; or how much of the story in Genesis is mysterious parable, and how much concrete history, by the mere logic of its loftier accent, of the nobler account it gives of his own origin, the unlearned man accepts it.

Or, take the Christian account of God; and is there any other theory comparable with it, not merely for scale and awfulness, but for tenderness and grace and beauty? 'God is light'; 'God is love'; 'a God of truth and without iniquity.' The radiant light—as even Plato guessed—is but His shadow. When Charles Kingsley lay on his death-bed, and there came to him a gleam of that vision which death brings sometimes to dying eyes, he said suddenly, after lying long silent, 'How beautiful is God!' And what may be called the mere convincing beauty of God, as revealed in the Bible is, as a force making for faith, almost better than any logic.

The unlearned man reads in an old psalm, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' And under the music of the words strange emotions stir in the heart. 'Why, this,' he feels, 'ought to be true. It must be true!' Let the conception of God as presented in the Christian scheme be realized: the wedlock of measureless power with infinite tenderness; the unstained holiness which for sin is a consuming fire, and yet the love beyond imagination which for the sinner is a redeeming force; God revealed in Christ, speaking to us in Christ's voice, touching us with Christ's hands. Unless the very sense and instinct of beauty in us be destroyed, this account of God, by mere loftiness and sweetness, stirs the human soul that meditates on it to adoration.

Or, take the Christian doctrine of heaven, the existence beyond death, with its eternal compensations; its glow of perfected life and faculty, its splendour of environment, its great companionships. If it be a dream, is there any other vision that ever awoke in the chambers of a sleeping brain to compare with it? Suppose we say that gates of pearl and streets of gold, strains of music and garments of saintly white, are mere earthly symbols, as no doubt they are. Yet what unguessed, unrealized glow shines through the symbols! What spiritual splendour burns behind them! If it be a dream, alas for the moment of waking!

For the uncontroversial, not to say unlearned mind,

the artist's logic of beauty is a force on the side of religion not easily realized.

Then there comes a more prosaic test—what may be called the gardener's logic of fruit. The one evidence by which a tree is tested, and classified, is the fruit it bears. Scale of trunk, beauty of leaf, fragrance of blossom, all have their value; but they are mere preludes to something more than themselves—something for the sake of which they exist. A botanist, it is true, will, for scientific purposes, classify a plant by a hundred secondary and irrelevant details; but the ultimate logic, the logic of the street and of the market, the logic of practical use, knows only one test. It is the test of fruit.

Now, as the unlearned man reasons, here is this great tree we call Christianity. Nobody can deny the tree! Its roots wrap the round world in their grasp; its widespreading branches overshadow whole nations. But there are many voices assuring us that it is only a upas tree; we are invited to cut it down, and assured the world will be the sweeter for the process. Before we cut it down, let us stop a moment, and ask, What fruit in history and in life does this tree bear? and, the plain man reflects, one need not be a botanist in order to judge of the fruit of a tree.

Now, the fruit of Christianity in history, taken in general terms, and allowing for a thousand accidental failures, is undeniable. It is a fact to which all history bears witness, that two thousand years ago

the civilized world was dying. The human race, say at that moment when, beneath the daggers of the assassins, Julius Caesar fell in the senate-house, was, tried by any moral test, a dying world. Freedom was dying; humanity was dying, or dead; civilization was corroded through and through with decay. And from the line of the Caesars down to the later Roman Empire, this dreadful process of death and decay spread.

But the curious thing is that the world, after all, is not dead to-day! It may be almost said to be in its youth. There has come to it a second youth, a rebirth of civilization, an emergence of nations whose standard of law and humanity obeys some strange upward impulse. What has wrought this marvel, so that the world which, twenty centuries ago, was visibly dying, is to-day full of living, purifying, and ascending forces? There is only one possible answer. Nearly two thousand years ago, in an obscure village, in an obscure land, a Jewish peasant was born. For thirty years He lived a poor man's life, working at the carpenter's bench in a village workshop. For three years He was a reformer and a teacher; and then He died—and died the death of a criminal.

And it is the theory of Christianity that those thirty years of silent life, those three years of patient teaching, and that criminal's death, turned the world clean round. It changed the very formula of the curve on which the world is travelling. Since then

the path of the race has been upwards into ever-increasing light. And, as we have already argued, there is one odd, direct, and unmistakable proof of this fact. It is written afresh every morning on every newspaper in the land. It is the mere date in the calendar! We acknowledge afresh with each sunrise that the world must date its history from that morning when Christ was born. The nations never consulted together and agreed to do this; but by some mysterious instinct, by the silent compulsion of plain fact, the human race to-day agrees to reckon its history from that far-off morning when, lying low amongst the beasts, a Jewish mother pressed the new-born Christ to her woman's bosom. This is the fruit of Christianity in history. It saved the race from perishing.

And what is the fruit of Christianity in the life actually about us? To an extent unrealized, or even forgotten, all the things of which we are proudest are the direct fruit of Christianity. If from the pictures in the art gallery of any great city all of noble thought and emotion that religion creates were taken, how much of art would survive? Or if from the shelves of a great library could be withdrawn all of poetry and song, of lofty thought, and kindling speculation, and moving story religion has called into existence, the library would be left rifled and well-nigh valueless. What force has built the hospitals that are the pride of great cities, and the

orphanages that shelter the outcasts? These institutions are found nowhere except where the foot of Christ has trodden, and the breath of Christ has passed. If from the very gravestones under which sleep the dead could be taken all the words of hope borrowed from the pages of the Bible that shine there amid the records of human grief, what a new and deeper blackness would lie on the very grave!

Let the man, again, that Christianity makes, or ought to make—and does make, if its ideal is reached—be considered. There are many men, of course, who are infidel in faith, and yet have a certain nobility of life—men like John Stuart Mill, or Huxley, or Fitzjames Stephen. But these men resemble cut flowers. They carry the bloom of the earth in which they grew, the perfume of the plant on which they blossomed. But it is only for a moment. They are broken off from the parent stem. They have no right to the perfume or bloom which are native to it. The grace of their lives really borrows its energy from the faith they have forsaken. Unbelief ought to be judged by its second generation.

But let the true moral product of Christianity be compared with the type of character which infidelity, when it has come to its kingdom, and evolved its own ethics, has produced, and must produce. Let Rousseau, stealing, under the shadow of night, through the streets of Paris to drop his seventh infant into the receiving-box of a foundling hospital, and then hastening back

to add a new page to his *Contrat Social*, be compared, say, with Silas Told, 'the prisoners' friend,' labouring in the foulness of London prisons; or John Howard, flying across Europe to help the outcasts of every land.

But it is an ungracious task to contrast names, and there is no need to ask for anxiously balanced proofs. For the plain man the plain fact is sufficient, that in history, in national institutions, in men's lives Christianity has that best form of practical logic—the logic of visible and richest fruit.

There is, in addition, what may be called the philosopher's logic of tendency. A philosopher can take a principle, and if his logic is sufficiently true and penetrating, can deduce from it its inevitable consequences. He can take an acorn—at least he thinks he can—and deduce the oak. Now Christianity, it may be frankly confessed, is not always translated into perfect concrete form. Who judges Christianity always by Christians, might well draw some melancholy conclusions. Yet the whole tendency of the Christian system is undeniable. It is plain, as a matter of fact, that it makes for righteousness. It is a force working for human happiness.

Take, for example, what is generally regarded as the crudest and harshest of its ethical forms—the Ten Commandments. It is unnecessary to ask whether they really were spoken by God's voice on Mount Sinai, and written by divine fingers on tablets of stone. Let this question alone be asked: What is the drift of these

ten words? What would be their practical effect if they were universally adopted? The answer must be that they visibly make for the world's order and happiness. Not one could be taken away without leaving human life both poorer and less safe. 'Thou shalt not steal'; that puts a guard round every man's house. 'Thou shalt not kill'; that is a divine fence built round every man's life. 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'; that guards the purity of wedded life 'Honour thy father and thy mother'; on the foundation of those words stands the sweetness of the home.

Some wit, in the sad days of the eighteenth century, proposed to start a society for taking the 'not' out of the Commandments and putting it into the Creed. We have a number of practical philosophers always amongst us, who conduct their lives on the principle of leaving the 'not' out of the Commandments; and what do we do with these artists in ethics? We collect them, as far as we can; we cut their hair short; dress them in useful moleskin, marked with a broad arrow, so that we shall know them again; and we build a stone wall round them to keep them together. A world that rejected the Ten Commandments would be one vast prison without the stone wall! In every gaol is kept a book of photographs, and each criminal who passes through its cells leaves his likeness behind him. And to turn over the pages of one of these books of dreadful photographs is to find a new argument for religion. This is the type of human face

which leaving the 'not' out of the Commandments produces; faces scorched with lust, bitter with hate, dark with murder, scribbled over with the signature of every evil passion. We have only to imagine a world filled with these faces, and no God above it, and this would be hell!

Philosophers have always delighted in pictures of an imaginary world, an ideal and perfect state; from the Atlantis of Plato to the Utopia of Sir Thomas More. Now, it is easy to imagine a fairer world, one immeasurably better than ever poet imagined or philosopher constructed. It is simply a world in which everybody is a Christian! Imagine walking down the streets of one of the cities of such a world! Let it be still a city of earth, with its tumult of business, its hurrying crowds, its eager faces, the changeful skies above it, the commonplace soil beneath. Let everything be the same as before; the one tremendous change being that every man and woman is a Christian! Every home is the kingdom of love and purity. The Golden Rule knits all lives together. Trust has taken the place of suspicion, charity of greed. Macaulay sings of early Roman days—

> Then none were for a party,
> Then all were for the state;
> Then the great man helped the poor,
> And the poor man loved the great.

As a matter of sober fact, there never were such days in the stormy history of our race. But that golden

time would dawn to-morrow if Christianity became instantly and perfectly authoritative in every human life.

It cannot be denied, in brief, that Christian ethics and Christian teaching, if suddenly made supreme amongst us, would, at a breath, bring in a golden age. And its tendency, and the goal towards which it is day and night working, constitute part of the title-deeds of Christianity.

Another form of what may be called the homespun logic of the Christian faith is the business man's argument of prudence. Prudence is the sane man's Bible. His first principle is that he will run no needless risks. He does not know that his house will be burned down; but it may be, and so he insures it. His second principle is that he will neglect no reasonable chances. He does not know that if he buys a big line in wheat it will rise, in six months, 20 per cent. in value; but if he sees a chance of making a profit on that scale, he will not go to sleep before he grasps it. Run no needless risks, neglect no reasonable chances: these are the principles on which a great business is built.

How those principles reinforce Christianity it is needless to state. As we have argued elsewhere, no one can prove, or ever has proved, the stupendous negatives of infidelity. No one can guarantee that its guess as to God, and our relation, or want of relation, to Him; as to eternity, and the degree in which our acts in this life must influence us throughout that

eternity, is true. On the lowest reading of Christian evidence it is probable God exists. Sin *may* involve eternal death. It may cost us heaven. No one has ever crossed the dark frontiers of death, explored the world beyond, and come back to say, 'I have trodden all the paths of eternity, and found there nothing to make a bad man afraid.' There is, let us say, a chance that the Bible may be true; and on mere business principles—it is, of course, ignoble ground to take—yet, on the lowest reading of prudence, we ought not to run the tremendous risks involved in sin on the slender chance that the Bible may not be true.

A couple of miners on an Australian goldfield will stand on the slope of a hill and study the contour of the landscape to find what they call 'the lie of the reef.' When they have put together all the evidence available, and there seems a certain probability, less or greater, that by sinking a shaft at a certain point they will strike the reef, they mark out the shaft, give to the business of sinking it the patient toil of months. They fight their way through stone and gravel and clay for two thousand feet on the chance—the probability measured by a balance of chances—of gold being there. This is the miner's logic. It is the logic of the man of business.

And we have only to apply that logic to religion to find in it an ample title for the acceptance of all its laws. It is not, we repeat, the loftiest ground to take; but it is solid enough.

Then there is what may be called the practical man's logic; the final test of action. No man has a right to doubt Christianity until he has tried it; and when he has honestly tried it he certainly will no longer doubt it! He who takes Christianity and translates it into conduct: takes it to the shop and buys and sells by its laws; builds his home upon it, and trains his children by it—he proves religion.

What is the musician's logic? You gather round a harp a jury of philosophers, says Henry Ward Beecher, and ask them to decide whether, as an instrument, it is perfect. One judges it by its form, and reports it has the true curved outlines of a harp. Another tests it by the materials of which it is made. Here are the vibrating metal strings; the true materials of a harp. But there comes a simple man who knows nothing about the laws of sound, the properties of metals, or the science of music. The only thing he knows is how to play the harp. He draws his hand across the strings, and the rich music slumbering in them awakens; it floats out on the trembling air, it charms all ears. What need is there of any report of philosophers? The music proves the harp.

And the great system of Christianity is a divine harp, an instrument that can fill human life with music; and the only proof needed is to touch with obedient fingers its strings. The answering music is its own logic.

Men doubt about prayer, and ask is there any place

for it in the iron circle of laws which girdle the world? There is a philosophical argument for prayer which, in its own order, is final; but the supreme proof of prayer is the act of praying. He who has knelt at God's feet, and in the hush and awfulness of prayer has in spirit adored and trembled, has felt the touch and breath of the living Spirit of God—he knows prayer to be real. Men doubt whether Christ still lives and walks amongst men, and is their Saviour. The way to settle the question is not to stand and argue about Him; but to go to His feet, and, falling there, cry, 'Lord, save me, I perish!' It is to accept His commands, and try, even with failing human hands, to obey them.

There are two ways—the astronomer's way and the sailor's way—of proving the truth of the nautical tables. The astronomer sits in his observatory with his instruments about him, and with the help of careful observations and complex mathematical calculations he proves the truth of the tables. He proves it by geometry, and with the certainty of a mathematical demonstration. No one can doubt the proof. But all the while he sits in the observatory and works out the process on a slate.

The proof is good in its order. But the sailor has quite another logic. He takes the tables, and they interpret for him the signal lights of heaven. He hoists his anchors, spreads his sails, and across the uncharted sea, through calm and storm, through day and night, round the wide world he sails, and gets safe

to port. He knows as surely as the astronomer that the tables are true, but it is by a different logic. He has proved them by sailing by them. Who doubts the chart when he has reached the port?

All this, it may be said, is imperfect logic, very remote from metaphysical certainty, and quite incapable of being expressed in the terms of formal reason. The man of science smiles austerely upon it. But it is the logic on which the stock exchange stands. It is the logic on which the farmer ploughs his field, and the sailor navigates his ship. It is the logic of business and the daily life; the logic on which men risk their fortunes and their lives every hour. It has a right to be authoritative in religion.

A fuller and more scientific scheme of proof for religion is possible, but nobody need wait for it. The majority of men and women, indeed, can never attain to it, and they need not expend a sigh on its absence. The homespun logic of the unlearned is sufficient for all the offices of religion.

EPILOGUE

THE foregoing chapters simply give examples of the innumerable correspondences which link the spiritual and the secular realms together; instances of profound agreement, yielded alike by history and science and philosophy, at whatever point, and by whatever method, they may be tested. As the key fits the lock, so the great things of religion answer to the deep things of the heart and the great things of the physical universe. And the chapters here written, it may be claimed, do not represent a cluster of what may be called unrelated credibilities. These manifold justifications of religion—signs of its energy in history, analogies in science, correspondences in nature and in the soul — these have a cumulative force; and they might be reinforced by facts gathered from every field of knowledge open to the human mind. The chapters, too, are a study in what may be called contrasting credibilities. They show how, in any form in which the question can be tried, the rejection of religion carries with it difficulties infinitely greater than its acceptance.

Christianity, it is true, does not solve all puzzles.

It does not pretend to find an answer to every question. If it did, that very characteristic would prove it to be of human origin. That it shades off into mystery at a thousand points; that it tests us by difficulties; that it requires us to walk by faith, and to deal with forces half known, and less than half comprehended, shows its agreement with the general scheme of human life. These conditions of incomplete knowledge are part of our discipline. A world in which everything was known, that had not a mystery that challenged our wonder, or a discovery to tax our intelligence, would leave us with half the motives for effort slain.

But even those who remain unconvinced of the truth of historic Christianity must admit that it answers all the ends of a true religion. It sweetens life; it creates saints; it inspires missionaries; it brings gifts of divine peace to dying hours. It is an energy lifting the whole race up to new heights of goodness. It is a barrier to all the forces which would destroy society. All this is written in history; it is visible in the living world about us.

And Christianity may well be set at this point in contrast with any of the forms of unbelief. The rejection of Christianity solves no problems. It adds a new perplexity to them all. It deepens all the shadows of life; it loosens all the deep anchorages of morality. The ethical trend of materialistic belief is clearly visible in Haeckel and his school. He, at least, has the courage of his logic. If man is only a

chemical ferment, an albuminous compound, a little patch of plasm as destitute of either will or responsibility as, say, a seidlitz powder, what has he to do with morality, or morality with him? What moral obligations link together a handful of seidlitz powders packed into the same box?

Haeckel holds that morality in man, like the tail of a monkey or the shell of a tortoise, is purely a physiological effect. A moral habit resembles, he says, nothing so much as 'the action of nitric acid on the lower oxydes of nitrogen.' Nay, the categorical imperative itself—that sublime sense of duty which moved, as deeply as the vision of the starry heavens themselves, the sense of wonder in Kant—is resolved by Haeckel into a 'long series of phyletic modifications of the phenomena of the cortex.' The moral sense thus disappears, or is resolved into a spray of meaningless words.

Now, this is a creed which, as it stains through to the popular mind, must create a morality—or, rather, an immorality—after its own pattern. The process is already visible in the philosophers themselves. In his *New Conceptions of Science*, for example, Mr. Carl Snyder announces 'a new criminology,' a moral code in which not a knavish brain, but a defective pair of lungs, will be the true crime. 'We shall not punish,' he says, 'but the deformed, the defective, the diseased must be incessantly weeded out.' Haeckel, in his latest book, *The Wonders of Life*, as we have already

shown, argues for the poisoning of the aged and of the incurable sick. He records with admiration that 'many experienced physicians who practise their profession without dogmatic prejudice have no scruple about cutting short the sufferings of the incurable by a dose of morphia or cyanide of potassium,' and he asks us to think 'what a blessing this is both to the invalids and their families.' In the same work he argues that the tenderness with which a mother fights for the frail life of her sickly baby is nothing less than an offence against society. She ought to put a string round the tender little throat, and draw it tight till the fluttering breath ceased. This is her plain duty to the race.

How much of what the world to-day counts precious —pity for human pain, the tenderness that ministers to the weak, the charity that cares for the helpless, the patience that watches over broken and failing life— this new belief about man would destroy! It would reshape society on the ethical ideas of the brothel and of the slaughter-house. Yet all this is the logical and inevitable goal of materialistic unbelief. When full grown it would destroy the world, and it would fit the world for destruction by making it hateful.

Truth, of course, is sacred, no matter what its consequences; and we might accept even a theory about ourselves and the universe so dreadful, if the evidence on which it stood were sufficient. But the creed of materialistic unbelief has absolutely no authoritative evidence. Its acceptance represents the triumph of

unreasoning credulity. Haeckel, for example, quotes with scorn the opening sentence of the Apostles' Creed: 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,' and he offers us as a substitute for God and as the true starting-point of life—and on nothing better than his own private authority—'a chemical substance of a viscous character, having albuminous matter and water as its chief constituents.' 'The chemical process which first set in,' he announces, '. . . must have been catalyses, which led to the formation of albuminous combinations. The earliest organisms to be thus formed can only have been "plasmodomous monera,"' &c. (p. 355). With a spray of words like these, and a procession of assumptions and suppositions as long and various as the tail of a comet, Haeckel thus constructs a rival *credo* to that of Christianity.

But it is absolutely without proof! All known proof, indeed, is in the other scale. The whole authority of science, as represented by its wisest minds, is in opposition to it.

'If a man of science,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'seeks to dogmatize concerning the Emotions and the Will, and asserts that he can reduce them to atomic forces and motions, he is exhibiting the smallness of his conceptions, and gibbeting himself as a laughing-stock to future generations.'[1]

Lord Kelvin pronounces the attempt to account for

[1] *Hibbert Journal.*

life in this fashion as 'utterly absurd.' 'Scientific thought,' he says, 'is compelled to accept the idea of Creative Power. Forty years ago I asked Liebig, walking somewhere in the country, if he believed that the grass and flowers which we saw around us grew by mere chemical forces. He answered, "No, no more than I could believe that a book of botany describing them could grow by mere chemical forces."'

But we do not need the authority of scientists or of science in this matter. The very structure of the human mind rejects this theory of a chain with only one end to it, an infinite succession of effects with no cause to explain them. It is possible to put together a set of words describing phenomena so wonderful, but the mind refuses to picture an unending series of antecedents with no starting-point. It cannot strip itself of that obstinate and primary instinct which demands a cause which shall have no antecedent. 'The consciousness of cause,' says Herbert Spencer, 'can only be effaced by the destruction of consciousness'; and Haeckel's theory leaves all the phenomena of the visible world in the category of things uncaused.

To accept his theory represents a more violent effort of faith than is required for belief in the Old and New Testaments put together. For that theory is only a crude human guess, disguised in learned words, destitute of a scrap of evidence, disavowed by all serious science, and in quarrel with the very nature of the human mind,

Its sole evidence is found in the stentorian tones in which it is proclaimed.

He who accepts Christianity, on the other hand, opens his life to a creed which has behind it a vast and manifold body of evidence; a creed which finds its verification alike in science, in history, and in the human consciousness itself, and which is accepted by the general reason of the race. Its own grace and loftiness, the place in the universe it gives to man, the moral ideals to which it is shaping him, the forces with which it touches him—these are its title-deeds.

> O mighty love! Man is one world, and hath
> Another to attend him.
> Since then, my God, Thou hast
> So brave a palace built, O dwell in it,
> That it may dwell with Thee at last!
> Till then, afford us so much wit,
> That, as the world serves us, we may serve Thee,
> And both Thy servants be.

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